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GEORGE CLOONEY Interview
Mario Puzo's GODFATHER SAGA The Last Bloody Chapter
HOWARD STERN'S Son OF THE Beach STAR JAIME BERGMAN NUDE
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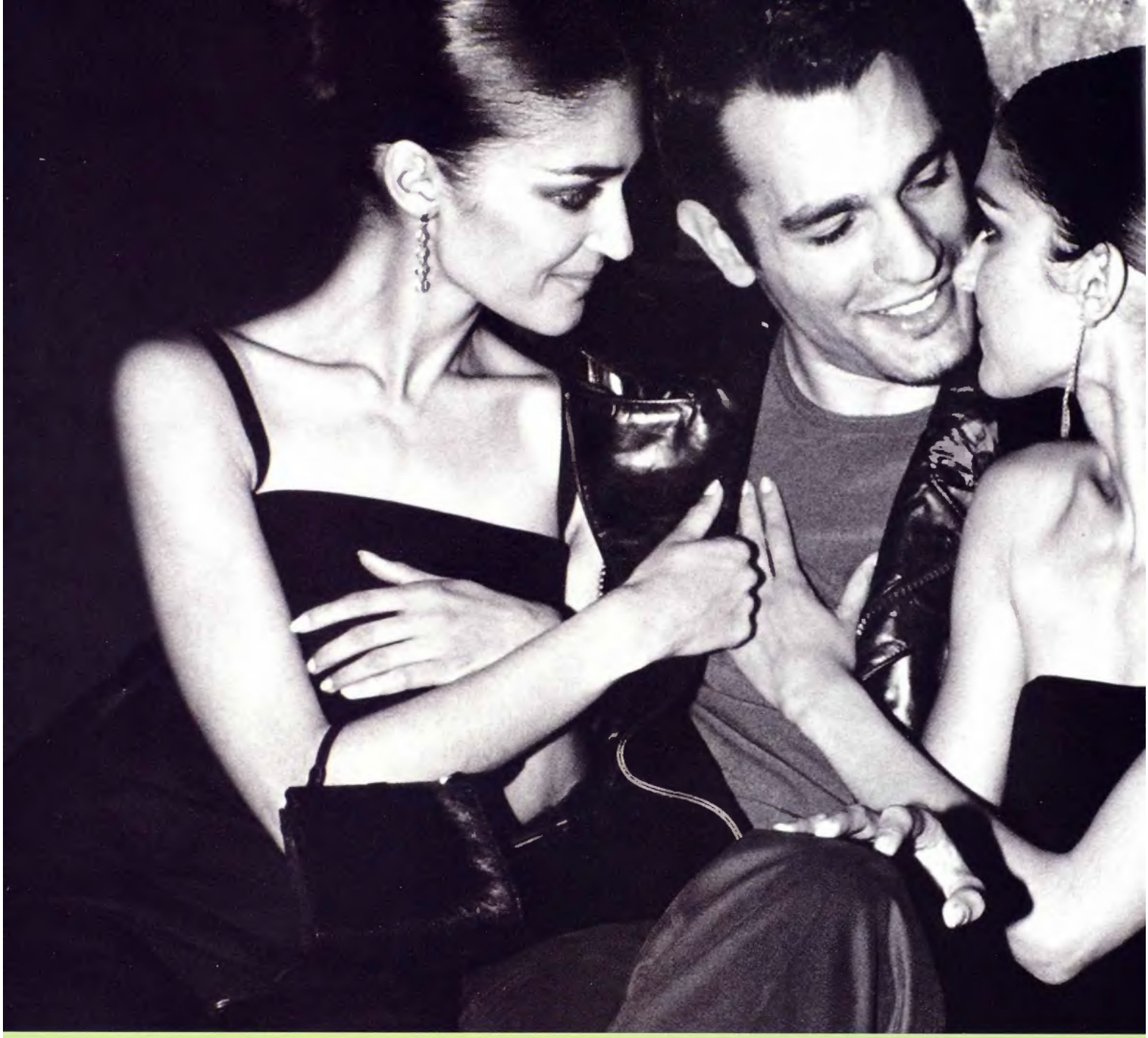

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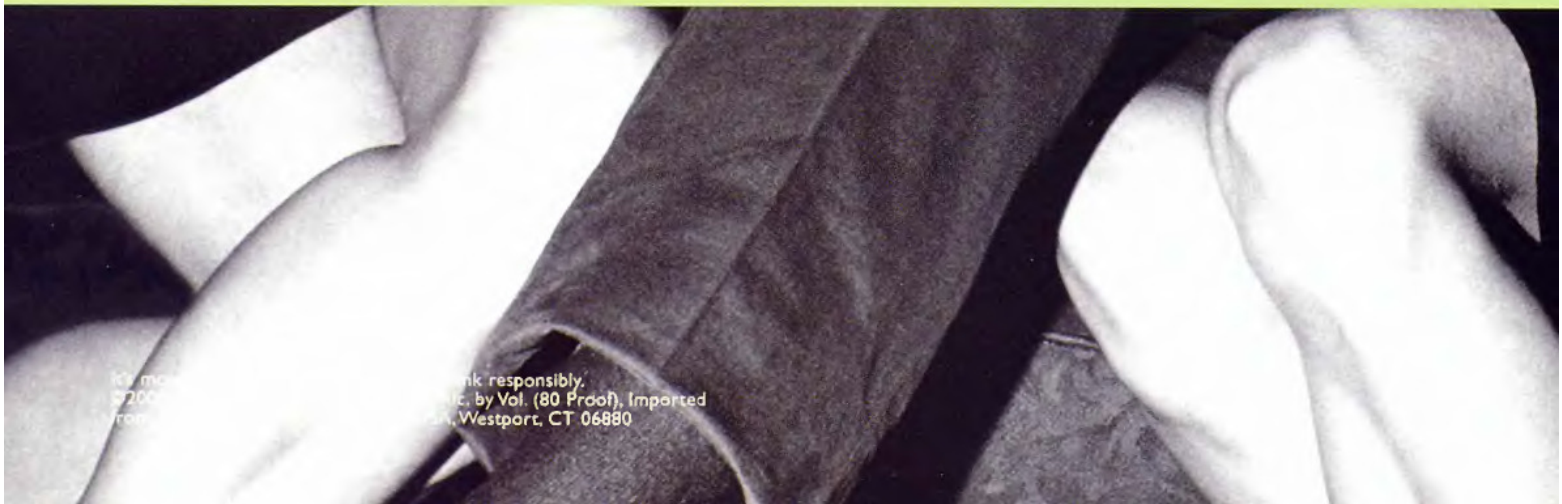

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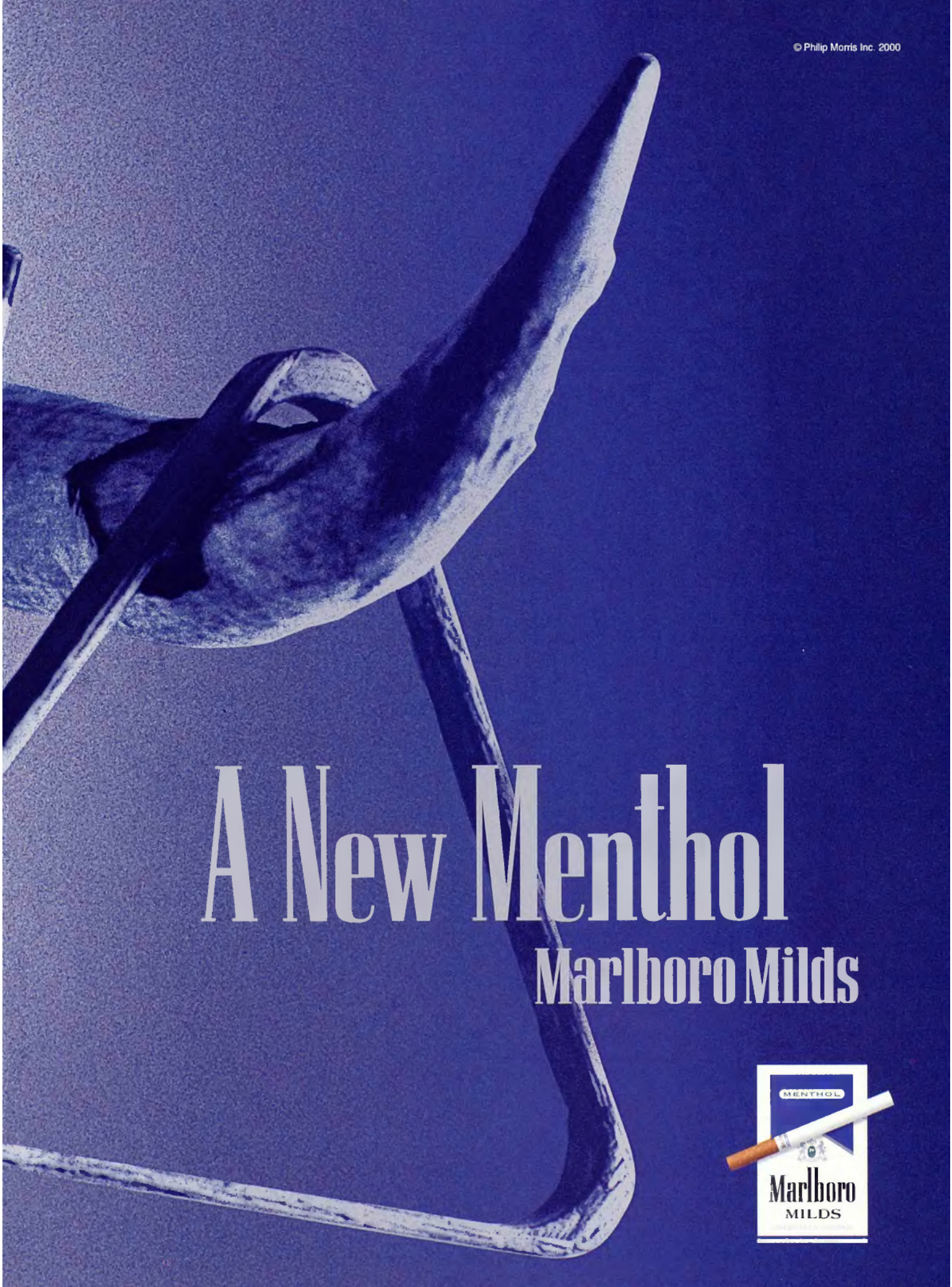

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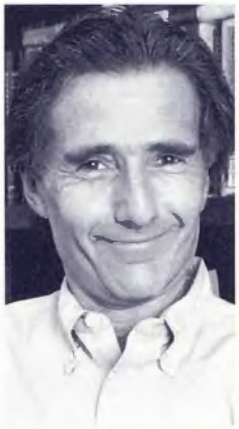
Playbill

SOME GUYS have all the luck. Some guys have all the fame. Some guys have all the girls. There's one magazine that has all three. You're holding our bachelor party *Son of the Beach* blanket bingo in Vegas issue. Leading the pack is our Indian bike–riding buddy Gorgeous **George Clooney.** What's remarkable about Clooney isn't his hold over women—that's a given, thanks to *ER*—but his appeal among men predisposed to envy him. Add his work in *Out of Sight* and *Three Kings*, and you'll understand the sound and fury heralding his new movie about a deadly northeaster. **Bernard Weinraub** of *The New York Times* caught up with Clooney in the calm before *The Perfect Storm* for an upright *Playboy Interview*. **Carson Daly,** the savior of MTV, is another man who does a solid job despite his good looks. He used to do his radio show at KROQ dressed in a swag T-shirt and boxers—an image that will fill his female fans with dewy inspiration. In a *20 Questions* with **Warren Kalbacker,** the host of *Total Request Live* embraces his role as the second coming of Dick Clark. He also says he prefers golf to groupies and marvels at today's acne-free kids. Speaking of popsters, Daly praises a certain boy group that made it onto one of our slamming single-page features. Check out *'N Sync, 'N Sane*. Then get *Down With the Farm*. It's a rapid-fire report on *Farmclub.com*—the new challenge to Daly's constitutional, *TRL*. But perhaps you're in the mood to sun worship. Our cover girl, **Jaime Bergman** (Miss January 1999), makes it easy to enjoy Howard Stern's new comedy, *Son of the Beach*. "The scripts," she says, "are unbelievable." So are her suits.

The one thing sexier than the ads for the Hard Rock Hotel in Vegas is a trip to Vegas itself. The place Frank called Crapsville is a young man's town again. The girls there will make you think you've died and gone to some sort of sweet hell. For advice, read *Absolute Vegas*. Then it's on to cards, cigars, a fat lady and tales of ecdysiastic excess. We're talking bachelor parties. The stories in *Don't Pet the Donkey: An Oral History of Bachelor Parties* by Senior Editor **Christopher Napolitano** (illustrated by **Istvan Banyai**) are about celebration—and survival. **Scott Bindley** (*One Guy. Four Ex-Girlfriends. Lots of Wine*) survived an ordeal of his own: He held a focus group composed of his former lovers. Let him be a lesson to you. His exes felt he dressed too conservatively, didn't stand up to them when they were bad and didn't dive down enough when they were good. (**Janet Woolley** did the art.)

Do you have a *Sopranos* jones? Well, we have the real *Godfather III*—a piece of *Omerta* (Random House), the last book in **Mario Puzo's** Mafia trilogy. In the excerpt, twin brothers pull off a million-dollar hit. But there's a catch—and her name is Rosie. The artwork by **John Thompson** is right on target. From stone-cold killers to granite faces: For thrills of the cardiovascular sort, chalk your hands and turn to *Still Rocking* by **Nancy L. Prichard.** She lists the best cams and belaying tools, then rates climbing destinations. If your idea of getting a grip is grabbing a putter, then play through *No Bogies*. The fashion spread is our vision of fairway as runway. For less genteel sport—extreme wrestling—catch *Blood, Guts and Staple Guns*.

It's time to buy a digital camera—particularly if you're hooked on the Net. As a buying guide, *Digicams Can* by **Don Sutherland** will have an electronics salesman howling. To get your girlfriend growling, turn her on to erotic photographer **Natacha Merritt** and the images on our one-pager, *Digital Diaries*. Keeping things spicy, we have piquant Latin *chicas* in a pictorial by **Richard Fegley.** It's called *Nice Chalupas!*—and it's sure to ring your taco bell.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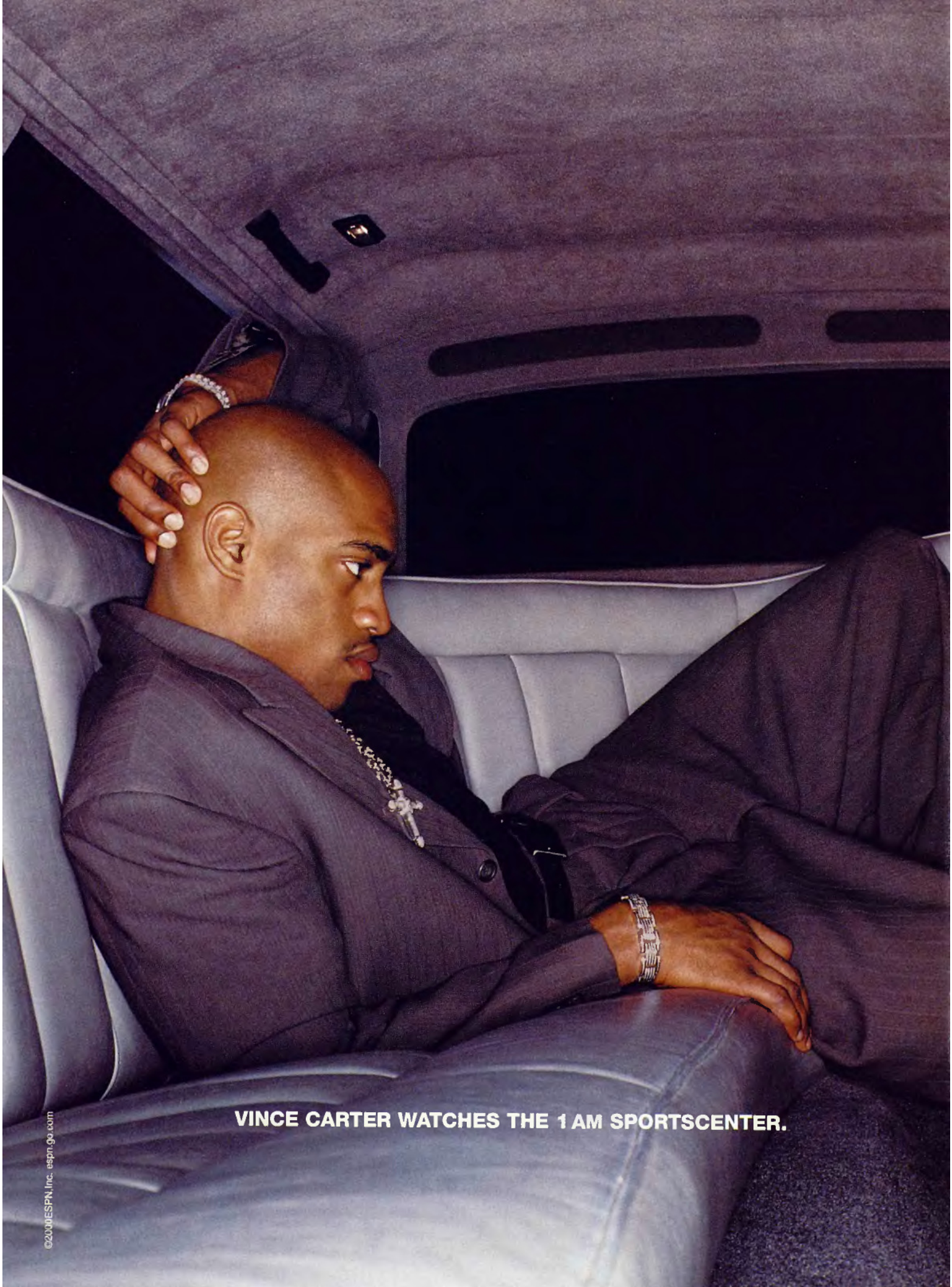

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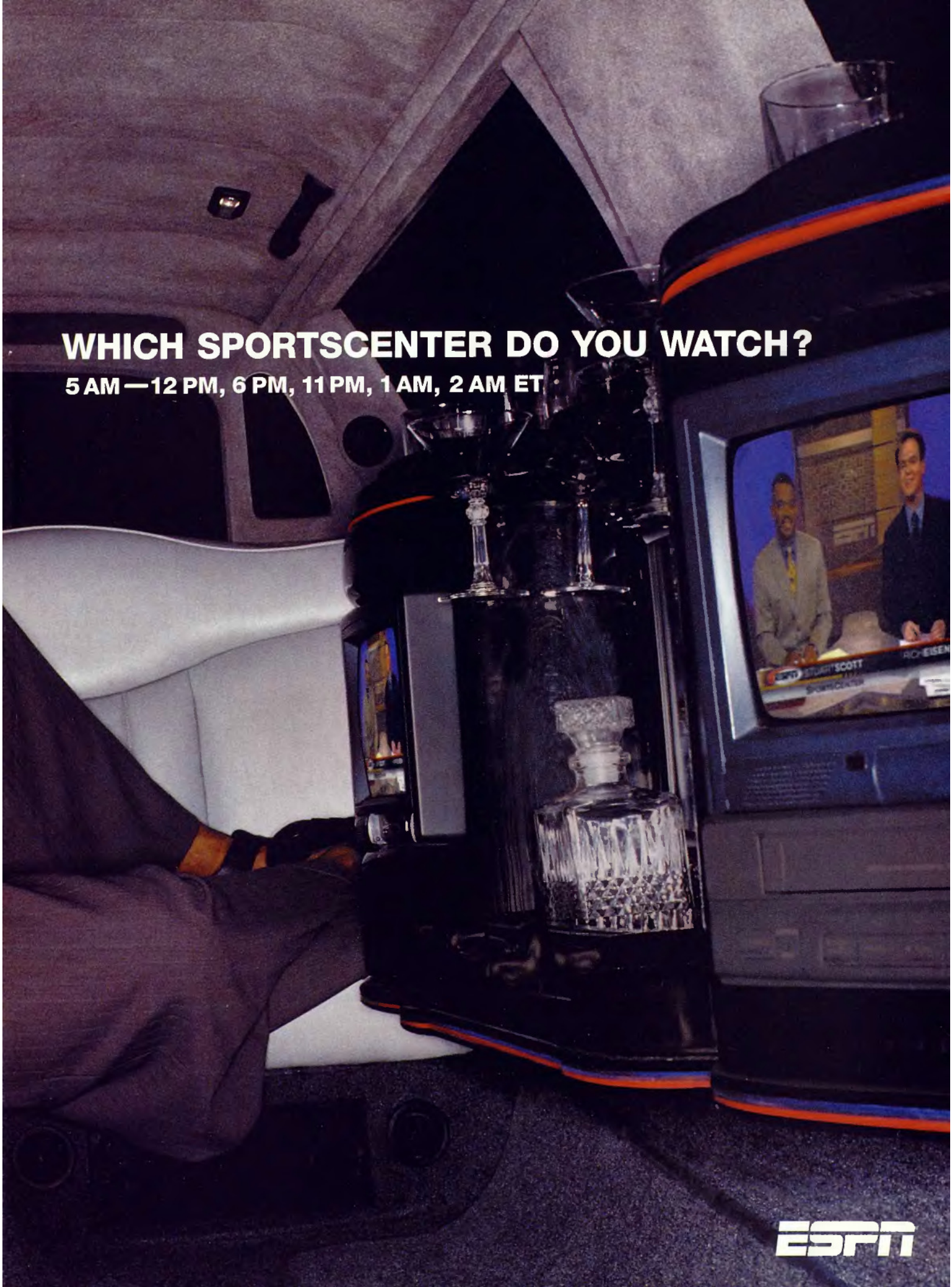
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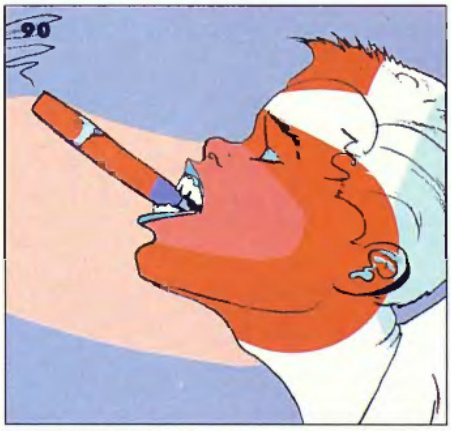

cover story

PLAYBOY's 45th Anniversary Playmate, Jaime Bergman, stars in Howard Stern's hilarious sitcom, Son of the Beach. She plays lifeguard B.J. Cummings, and when her character administers mouth-to-mouth, she straddles the lucky stiff. Here, the undertow catches her bathing suit. "Bottoms up," quips our Rabbit.

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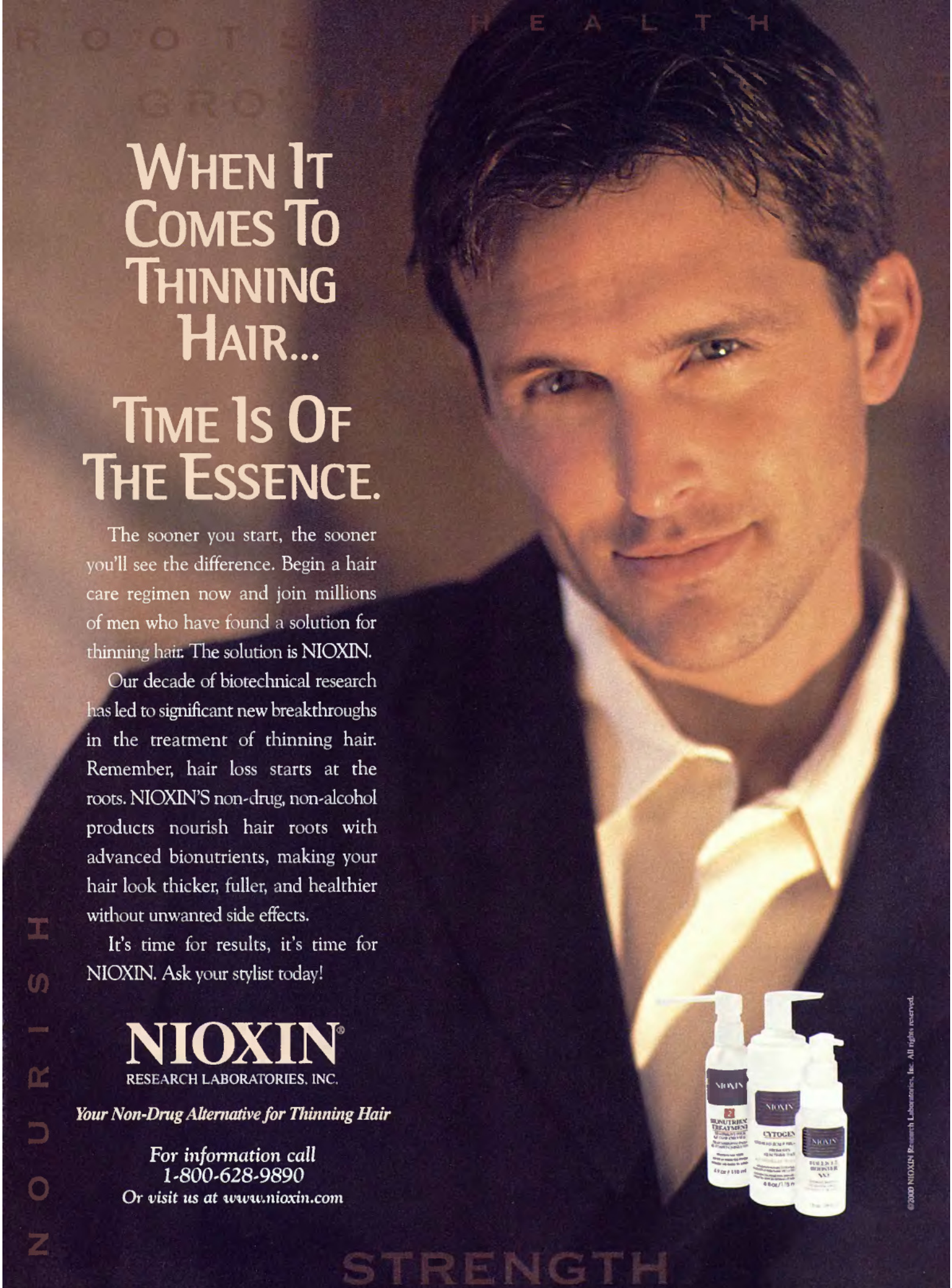
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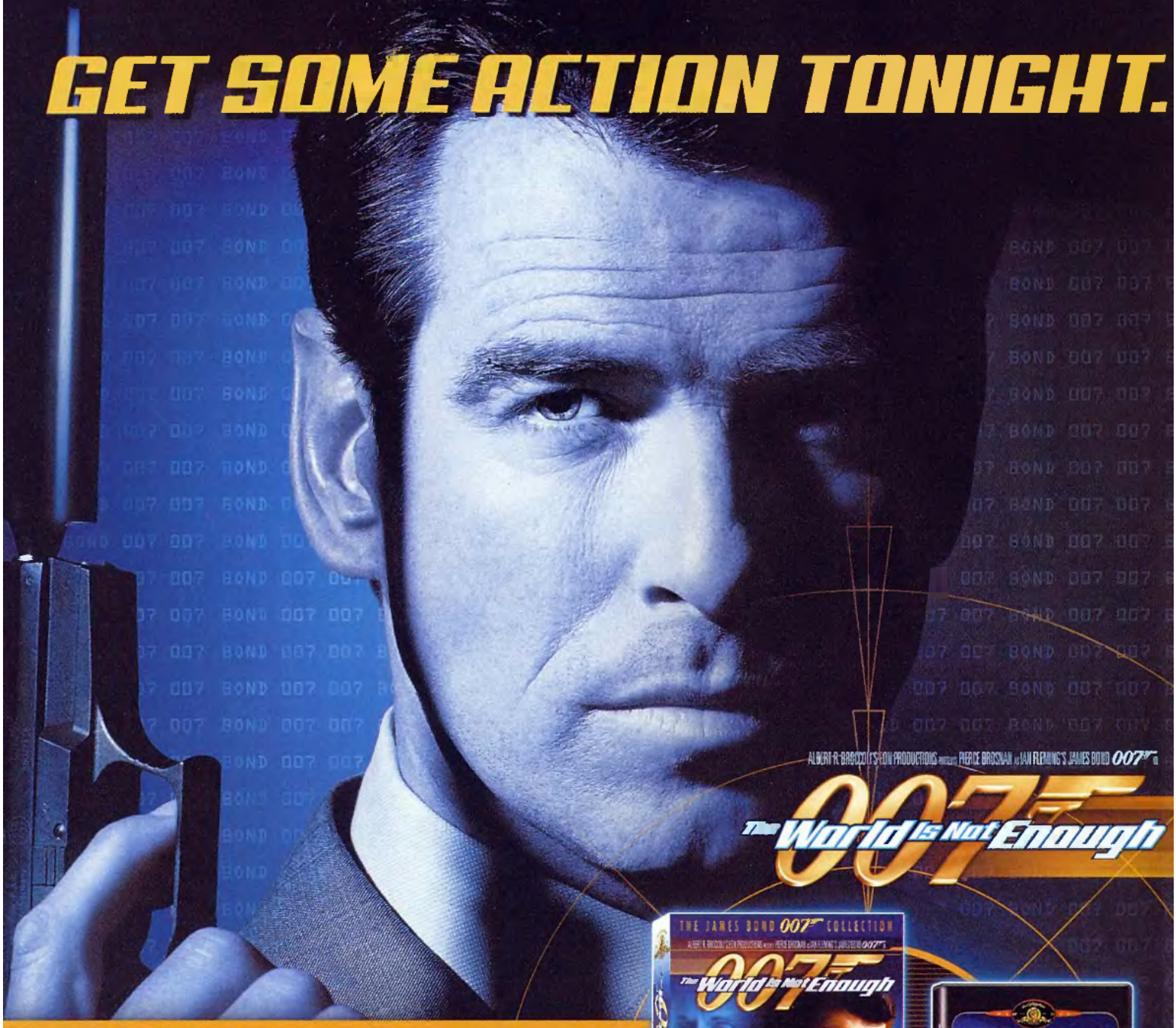

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READY TO PARTY

Hef and his soul mates Mandy, Sandy and Brande at a Mansion new school pajama party celebrating Limp Bizkit's appearance in the April issue of PLAYBOY. Bizkit's lyric "It ain't fake when the girls get naked" could have been written by Hef.

BRANDE AND BIZKIT

Playmate Brande Roderick presents Fred Durst with the PLAYBOY Music Poll Award for Bizkit's video titled, appropriately enough, *Nookie*.

THE GUESTS WERE ELECTRA-FIED

The joint was jumping as hostess Carmen Electra welcomed singers Bobby Brown, Whitney Houston and Apollonia to a Mansion party. The occasion: Former Jodeci singer Dalvin DeGrate launched his debut CD, *Met.A.Mor.Phic*, on Maverick Records.

THE BUNNY'S IN VOGUE

The March issue of *Vogue* hailed the Rabbit Head as the pop-culture icon of the decade. We've known that for half a century.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING AND A NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Movie night brings out the stars: *Green Mile* Oscar nominee Michael Clarke Duncan, photographer David LaChapelle and artist Damien Loeb were among Hef's guests. Brad Pitt hung out while Annie Leibovitz photographed Jennifer Aniston in the pool for *Vanity Fair*. In the Big Apple, April cover girl Bijou Phillips (right) celebrated her pictorial at Centro-Fly with celebrity guests.

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ROCKIN' WITH HEF

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Bijou and Limp Bizkit aren't the only A-listers who want to party with Mr. Playboy. (1) Brande Roderick, Jodi Ann Paterson, Angel Boris, Hef, Gillian Bonner and Fred Durst. (2) Julie Strain, Antonio Sabato Jr. and Lisa Dergan. (3) Fred and Bijou with Jodi Ann and Ava Fabian. (4) Gary Sinise drops by Bijou's party at Centro-Fly. (5) Claire Danes and Bijou. (6) Tyson Beckford and Nicole Wood. (7) Hef and Carmen Electra, who hosted the Maverick Records party for Dalvin DeGrate. (8) Dalvin rocks the audience. (9) Natalia Sokolova, Lisa Dergan, Stacy Fuson and Angela Little. (10) Marilyn Manson and a friend hang with Hef at the Bizkit party. (11) Nancy Valen and Shana Van Patten. (12) Jenny McCarthy with Bunnies at the Bizkit bash. (13) Jaime Bergman and Hef. Leo was there, too, but he arrived late.

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Dear Playboy

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D.C. DUO

I bought the April issue when I saw that the subjects of the *Playboy Interview* are my close friends Rowland Evans and Bob Novak. Between the two of them—Rowly at 79 and Bob at 69—they've had more influence on public policy in the past half-century than any other journalists. They surely deserve the attention you gave them, and the fun excursion through their 37-year partnership did not disappoint.

Jude Wanniski
Morristown, New Jersey

Finally, after wading through *Playboy Interviews* with David Spade, Jon Stewart, Albert Brooks and Jesse Ventura (twice) over the past several months, we get the interesting and informative Evans and Novak interview. Please give us more like this one.

Cameron Burbank
Santa Cruz, California

April's *Playbill* whimsically refers to interviewees Evans and Novak as "crazy-ass conservatives." I think PLAYBOY may be surprised to discover that its readers consist of many conservatives—crazy-ass and otherwise—of which I'm proud to be one. Thanks for one of your best interviews ever.

Bob Dougherty
Ithaca, New York

Evans and Novak have been clouding the political waters for a generation. Promoting the view that all politics is rotten and that grown men cover it only for fun is a juvenile view of the current events shaping our destiny and only cheapens the PLAYBOY tradition.

Harold Putnam
Vero Beach, Florida

Novak's characterization of Ronald Reagan as being in the same league as Calvin Coolidge is laughable. Fiscal prudence was Silent Cal's legacy. After eight years in office, Reagan ran up the national debt more than all 39 of his predecessors combined. A better choice for great Republican presidents in the 20th century might have been Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower or even Nixon.

Joseph Bastrimovich
West Deptford, New Jersey

BODY BY BIJOU

When the April PLAYBOY arrived with its beautiful Bijou Phillips pictorial, I thought of another Bijou—the British version of the 2-CV Citroën from the Sixties. Luckily, this Bijou has a much sleeker chassis.

Chris Custer
Frederick, Maryland

I always enjoy your celebrity pictorials. Now I can add Bijou to my list of favorites.

Richard Puchstein
Lakeland, Florida

Bijou Phillips has got me California dreaming.

Bryan Burchfield
Birmingham, Alabama

Bravo to Ellen Von Unwerth for capturing on film the ineluctable splendor of Bijou Phillips.

Steve Wilson
Jersey City, New Jersey

THE SINGLE LIFE

I can't tell you how much I appreciate Yasmin Boland's article on how to satisfy a woman (*The Single Life*, April). Too often, verbal communication during sex is either awkward or nonexistent. I especially like the closer—a woman's largest sexual organ is her brain, not her clit. Thanks for all the useful tips.

Nikki McCauley
Belpre, Ohio

My compliments to Boland for the second-best and most informative article

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I've read in PLAYBOY. My favorite is on how to keep the ultimate bachelor pad.

Doak Painter
Corpus Christi, Texas

GIVE IT A BREAK

Your *Mantrack* item "How to Love Your Glove" (April) includes an illustration of how to break in a baseball glove. The procedure is accurate, but five years ago, Advanced Product Technologies introduced Hot Glove Treatment to the ball-playing world, and now a new glove can be broken in and shaped to a player's hand in less than 10 minutes with heat-activated foam. This is the modern method. If you want to rejuvenate an old, tired glove, APT makes a Hot Glove Reconditioner that works.

Larry Black
Atlanta, Georgia

I've been playing baseball since I've been able to walk, so I've had to break in a few gloves. Oil, however, is not the best thing to use, because it dehydrates the leather. Believe it or not, good old-fashioned shaving cream—not shaving gel—will produce the best results. It keeps the glove malleable and moist. Bear grease also does the trick. As a general rule, a glove needs conditioning three or four times a year.

Brandon Grabski
Plover, Washington

FINE BRANDE

As a wine connoisseur and someone who enjoys looking at beautiful women, I congratulate you for selecting Brande Roderick as Miss April. On page 100, Brande is pictured drinking wine with

her friends—and she's the only one properly holding her wineglass by the stem instead of the bowl. The purpose of using stemware is so that heat from your hand doesn't transfer to the wine. Now for the important question: Where can I buy a bottle of wine made from the grapes Brande crushed?

Marc Lubin
East Northport, New York

I'd always thought the expression "a face like an angel's" was cheesy, but I can't think of a more appropriate description for Brande.

Brandon Roush
Portland, Oregon

I'm thrilled to see PLAYBOY has finally given Brande the pictorial she deserves. The all-too-small Polaroid glimpses of her in *The World of Playboy* just haven't been enough.

Sheldon Paquin
Colton, California

THE FAB FOUR RULE

I'm tired of people trying to prop up their heroes by cutting down the Beatles. Joey Ramone does exactly that in Charles M. Young's *Songs That Changed the World* (April) while explaining why *Pictures of Lily* by the Who is one of his five favorite songs. Are we to assume that the Beatles, whose subject matter included world peace, are less deep than the Who because the Who wrote about masturbation?

Gary Reid
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

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THE DOCTOR OF LOVE IS IN

I hope that Barry White (*20 Questions*, April) is around and making music for many years to come.

R. Putt
West Lawn, Pennsylvania

I only wish your *20 Questions* with Barry White had been a full-fledged *Playboy Interview*.

Anthony Carter
Allentown, Pennsylvania

I WANT MY MP3

Thank you for acknowledging MP3-related websites that feature unsigned bands ("Where the Tunes Are," April). Those of us who work hard on getting our music heard are pleased with the MP3 revolution. Before this wonderful piece of technology came along, bands spent thousands of dollars to make cassettes and CDs for promo packets and practically gave them away just to have someone listen to them. Now thanks to the Internet, it's just a point, click and listen—and the only thing that is spent is time.

John Kaufman
Hagerstown, Maryland

PARENTING 101

I never thought I would receive parenting advice from PLAYBOY, but Asa Baber's April *Men* column ("The Secret Kingdom") gave me something to think about. As the mother of a four-year-old son, I now realize just how much boys need their fathers.

L. Manley
Rock Hill, South Carolina

RIGHT SAID FRED

Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit (*Big Bizness*, April) has talent, but he isn't using it to craft lyrics worthy of his ability and status as a voice of this generation. Though Durst brings controversial issues to the forefront, his trite songwriting only gives them lip service. Stop selling yourself short, Fred.

Joe Bartone
Providence, Rhode Island

Your Sex and Music issue is one of your best. The combination of music and cool people kept my attention. I especially enjoyed the Fred Durst interview. He's an ambitious man who isn't afraid to speak his mind. By the way, that was a really good call by Slick Rick on his Brubeck selection in *Songs That Changed the World*.

Jennifer Allen
Midwest City, Oklahoma

SUSHI, ANYONE?

Your *After Hours* item "Michelin Guide Men" (April) explores the notion that women want men who taste good. I lived in Japan for a year and discovered something fascinating. There is something in the diet that imparts a wonderful flavor to Japanese women that I have not found in America. I can only describe the taste as lightly salted butter—semisweet and highly addictive.

Chris Lumpkin
Seattle, Washington

KING OF COUNTRY

Finally, George Strait is getting the recognition he deserves. The king of country music has been the most consistent, most award-winning and most influential voice in that genre for 20-plus years. Hats off to PLAYBOY readers for acknowledging him with their vote for 1999 Country Music Album of the Year (*The Year in Music*, April).

Maximilian Martin
Del Rio, Texas

SPRING HAS SPRUNG

I loved your pictorial on *Spring Break 2000* (April) in Daytona. I had just returned from the Shangri-la of spring break when I leafed through the April issue and realized I had chosen the wrong week to go. A big hello to Hef from the fellows at UIUC.

Jay Kulaga
Champaign, Illinois

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PLAYBOY after hours

A GUY'S GUIDE TO WHAT'S HIP AND WHAT'S HAPPENING

REAR MOLARS

Some things truly are upside down—or at least backward—in Australia. A dentist in Melbourne treated dental pain by administering ozone through the rectum of at least one female patient. It was no laughing gas, however—he has been brought before his dental board for professional misconduct. He insists he's a pioneer and compares himself to Louis Pasteur. Though he may indeed have explored some virgin territory, blowing smoke up someone's ass is a long-established practice—which may explain his strategy with the dental board.

GIRL GROUP SEX

At an April 14 London show, a lucky fan of the band L7 had the chance to go home with more than a ticket stub. The all-woman group offered to raffle off their drummer for a one-night stand with a member of the audience. "We're not being hypocritical about rock and roll anymore," the band said in a press release. "Rock and roll is prostitution. We want to give our fans more bang for their buck. England has always made us horny. It has supplied us with masturbation material since we were kids, from Jack Wild to Mick Jagger."

NORWEGIAN WOOF

It is called *skijoring* (Norwegian for "ski driving") and it involves putting on a pair of cross-country skis, hitching yourself by bungee cord to an energetic dog or two and taking off across the snow under pup power. Almost any kind of dog will do, whether beagle or bullmastiff. If your pooch is the kind that is always pulling at the leash, you're in business. There are even organized competitions with prizes topping $1000. Before you jump into *skijoring* with both feet, make sure your skis are well waxed. The unofficial name for *skijor* trails is loop de poop.

THE LONELY CROWD

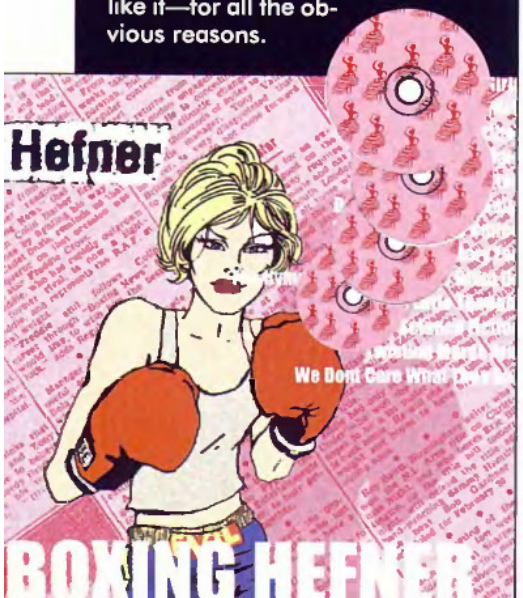
Heads up, Molly Ringwald. We hear there are more than 75 rent-a-fan agencies in the U.S. that will provide (starting at $150 per fan hour) a crowd of people to show up at an event to establish an aura of celebrity. They will shout, ask for autographs and take pictures. Tossing

HEY, ISN'T THAT TWYLA THARP?

"From the fiery effusiveness of pagan rituals to the languorous nights of amateurs of subtle pleasures, encompassing all forms of festive and explosive manifestations, be they traditional or spontaneous, private or public, orgies are a part of every civilization." So says the author of Orgies (Ipso Facto), a picture book of art and photography dedicated to people having sex in groups. We'll just thumb through it and leave the scholarship to others.

BRING ON THE CLONES

Hefner is a British alt-rock indie band that was born in art college. Lead singer and songwriter Darren Hayman has a nasally voice and a skill for writing sexy and ironic songs such as *Twisting Mary's Arm*, *Christian Girls*, *The Hymn to the Cigarettes* and *The Sweetness Lies Within*. The band is described as "melancholy without being whiny." *Boxing Hefner* is a one-two compilation from their first couple of CDs. We like it—for all the obvious reasons.



DON'T WALK AWAY, RENE

In addition to the covers of Cosmo, Francesco Scavullo shoots nudes—and photographs some of the world's most beautiful women. Consider, above, Rene Russo. In *Scavullo Nudes* (Harry Abrams), he collects his favorites, including Claudia Schiffer and Christy Turlington. Oh yeah, and there are pictures of naked guys, too. There is probably something to be said here about the beauty and sanctity of the human form, but we'll let someone else say it.

you the keys to their hotel rooms probably costs extra.

ST. AOL'S FIRE

Two Catholic organizations have petitioned the Vatican to establish a patron saint of the Internet. One nominee is San Pedro Regalado, a 15th century Catalan priest who is rumored to have appeared in more than one place at a time. Another is Saint Isidore of Seville, whose 20-volume *Etymologies*, an encyclopedia of sorts, was the closest thing to the Internet in the seventh century. Our vote is for Saint Silvester, an 11th century pole sitter and postman who, when he wasn't falling off his roost and crashing, would say to people, "You've got mail."

THE TIP SHEET

Thighbrows: Pubic muffage that has escaped the confines of a bikini bottom.

The Onion's Finest News Reporting, Volume One: Self-published book by the humorous newspaper and website. Favorite headlines include CIVIL WAR ENTHUSIASTS BURN ATLANTA TO GROUND, SCISSORS DEFEATS ROCK and NEIGHBORS REMEMBER SERIAL KILLER AS SERIAL KILLER.

To get lobstered: Horrible infrastructure problem plaguing Moscow. Underground steam pipe bursts, sidewalk opens up, pedestrians boil in hole.

DWUHCM: Driving while using head cold medication. According to *The Annals of Internal Medicine*, over-the-counter cold remedies have deleterious effects on drivers.

Panty Raider: CD-ROM in which gamers must strip supermodels down to bra and panties to save earth from teenage aliens.

Courier electronique: Term coined by France's Ministry of Finance to replace e-mail. Start-up, another Angloism, is now *jeune pousse*. Someone better tell President Chirac, who recently referred to *les start-upistes*.

CONDOMM

Ah, military intelligence. The U.S. Army's latest care-and-maintenance brochure is on the subject of condoms and how to use them. Although the specifics are unique (instead of lock-and-load, the drill is rip-and-roll) it reads like most Army brochures—as if written for someone with the IQ of a scallion. Handy hints include "don't open them with your teeth" and "never reuse condoms." We're surprised no one added, "May cause equipment to accidentally discharge during handling."

F@ CHANCE

If you're on any e-mail chains worth acknowledging, you've already received Outrageous but Actual E-mail Addresses. The basis for this list is the standard address protocol at some businesses and universities. Take the first six letters of the last name and attach them, fore or aft, to the first and middle initials. According to the e-mail, this policy has produced amusing and lewd results. Francis K. Kissinger becomes kissinfk; Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer, if his middle name began with an O, would be soballme. Add a suggestive corporate acronym and things get worse. Some striking examples include Bruce G. Dickson at Earth Now Group (bgdickso@eng.org); Iris Howe Adcock at Trans Oceanic (ihadcock@to.com); and Isaac M. Harding at the Institute of New England (imhardin@ine.edu). Wacky, huh? Only problem is, they're all fake. Remember, if it's on the Net and it's one of those really-cool-if-true things, it's not true.

CHECK THE DIPSTICK

When a race car sponsored by Viagra was dropped from the Daytona 500 field due to mechanical problems, *Tampa Tribune* sportswriter Martin Fennelly offered this diagnosis: "When Viagra mechanics popped the hood, they couldn't get it back down."

LIFE'S LITTLE, TINY MYSTERIES

Qtopics, a cheeky web polling outfit, queried people regarding the biggest questions to be addressed in the 21st century. Responses broke down into two generational groupings. For those aged 18 to 34, the pressing issues are "What's the best job to make me rich?" "Will they develop a pill that makes you thin?" and

DRINK OF THE MONTH

If you've noticed a lot of teeth grinding going on at your favorite bar, thank the manic new mixed drink of Red Bull and vodka. Although a thirst for the hyperactive energy drink has overrun the UK and is rumbling our way, the sticky mix of glucose, caffeine and an enzyme called taurine took a while to catch on (12 million cans were sold in 1997; 160 million in 1999). One reason is its sweet yet rusty flavor. "If it were about taste," a Red Bull spokesman said, "we'd have been here today, gone tomorrow." Red Bull was derived from a syrupy tonic popular among ricksha drivers in Southeast Asia. It was initially marketed as an energy drink, but sales didn't take off until someone in England had the brilliant idea of spiking it with vodka. Club kids gave it the nickname baby speedball. As Americans, we prefer TVR, a blend of tequila, vodka and Red Bull. We won't swear by the taste or smell, but we can say that in the morning it sounds like thunder.

1970
Revolutionary
Direct Drive
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1977
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1995
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QUOTE

"My butt is fascinating to me. I like it so much that whenever I dance, I'm always looking at it."
—TORI SPELLING

PC'S TO PLOWSHARES

Percentage of the 300 million computers purchased in the U.S. since 1980 that are in storage or taking up space in landfills: 75.

ANTHONY FREDA

FACT OF THE MONTH

More than 11 percent of the 17 million hunters in this country are women (up from four percent a decade ago). Among the 1.9 million female license holders are 539,000 bow hunters and 317,000 muzzle loaders.

WAL-TO-WAL MARKETING

The rank of Wal-Mart among retailers in the country: 1. Rank of Wal-Mart among toy retailers: 1. Rank of Wal-Mart among grocery retailers: 2. Rank of Wal-Mart among largest private employers: 1.

WAY OFF LINE

Percentage decline in sales of printed sets of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* since 1990: 80.

RUSH HOURS

Average number of hours that drivers in Boston spend in traffic gridlock: 66. Number of hours drivers in Detroit spend in gridlock: 62. In Dallas: 58.

BAD HAIR DAY

The proportion of American women who remove their facial hair once a week: 1 in 6.

MARGIN OF TERROR

Amount of stock that Americans bought on margin (i.e., with borrowed funds) in 1990: $35 billion. Amount of stock bought on margin in 1999: $228.5 billion.

TECHNICAL MISTAKES?

The average price-to-earnings ratio of all U.S. stocks between 1871 and 1996: 14. The average P/E ratio of stocks on the tech-laden Nasdaq index at the end of 1999: 200.

BAD SPORTS

Average annual salary of an American worker in 1950: $2876. Average annual salary of a major league baseball player in 1950: $13,228. The median American household income in 1998 (may include two salaries): $38,885. Average baseball player salary in 1998: $1.4 million.

PAPER CHASTE

The percentage of U.S. high schools whose sex education programs teach abstinence as the only form of birth control: 35. Percentage of Southern schools: 55.

WHO IS WORKING HARDER?

Percentage increase in the number of hours per week that Americans spent working since 1980: 4. Percentage decrease in the number of hours worked in Japan since 1980: 11. Percentage decrease in number of hours worked in the United Kingdom: 3. Percentage decrease of hours worked in France: 9.

LAND OF THE FREE

Number of people in prison or jail in the U.S.: 2 million. Portion of the world's prison population represented by the U.S.: 25. Percentage of world's population represented by the U.S.: 5.

BEEFING UP

Number of pounds of beef eaten by the average American last year: 69. Increase, in pounds, over the previous year: 1.

THE JOINT PROBLEM

Percentage of inmates at Joliet maximum security prison in Illinois who tested positive for drugs in 1999: 2. Percentage of prison employees who tested positive: 4. —PAUL ENGLEMAN

"Did O.J. really kill Nicole?" Those aged 35 to 55 want to know, "Is there a God?" "Will there be world peace?" and "How old is Dick Clark?" Behold the wisdom that comes with maturity.

iSPY

If you work on your company computer for an American firm, chances are one in three that your employers monitor the e-mail between you and your co-workers. What are they looking for? According to the folks at Cameo, makers of screening software, the following terms routinely raise the corporate red flag: fondle, reefer, meth, résumé, job offer, signing bonus, copyright, stress, performance review, unfair, I'll show him/her, pipe bomb, ammonium nitrate, fertilizer and anarchy.

COME ON MY SITE!

Register at DrDrew.com and they'll send you a complimentary condom. May not be much, but it beats another free mouse pad—which, to our ears, always sounded like slang for a feminine hygiene product.

OVERACHIEVING NIRVANA

Which rock star has made the most mayhem? According to England's *Melody Maker*, the all-time top hell-raiser (power chord, please) is Kurt Cobain, leader of Nirvana. His widow, Courtney Love, is eighth on the list. But at numbers five and six, Liam Gallagher of Oasis and Robbie Williams seem like lightweights compared with Keith Richards, who

TOO MANY CHOICES

Artist Lawrence Weiner installed these bathroom doors at the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York to make a creative statement. One door says Us, the other, Them. Where you stand on this may be determined by where you sit. But here, at last, we have artwork with a sense of urgency.

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SWING SET

The Lifestyle, an oddly subdued documentary on the current state of swingers, could have been titled *Debbie Does the Rotary Club*. It's a world of potluck dinners and backyard barbecues. Turns out swinging parties are a lot like family gatherings: No one knows what to say to granny.

landed the number seven spot. Similarly, Shaun Ryder of the Happy Mondays came in second, while the Who's convivial drummer Keith Moon placed third. Nevertheless, the magazine's editor, Mark Sutherland, is proud of the list. "Their antics," he notes, "read like a litany of sexual deviance, drug-fueled escapades, self-abuse and mutilation."

SHIT-FACED

European cosmetics manufacturers are in a quandary. A Dutch company has developed a new means of growing a particular algae that is a highly valued ingredient in such items as lipstick, facial cream and body lotion. The new method is simple and cheap, but it involves growing the algae on moist pig shit. Obviously, there is a potential marketing problem here. In facial cream, would the algae be considered repellent? In body lotion, would it be considered kosher? No matter what, it would be perfect for chapped lips—God knows it would discourage you from licking them.

ATLAS SHRUGGED

An e-mail chain letter of Unfortunately Named Places to Live has been making the rounds, perhaps in an effort to ground cyberspace in reality. To us, there's a 14-way tie for last place. The losers are: Arsoli, Italy; Muff, Northern Ireland; Twatt, Shetland; Dildo, Newfoundland; Climax, Colorado; Lickey End, West Midlands; Shafter, California; Lord Heresford's Knob, Scotland; Seymen, Turkey; Shag Island, Indian Ocean; Sexmoan, Philippines; Wet Beaver Creek, Arizona; Wankie, Zimbabwe and Brown Willie, Cornwall (UK).

TITTERING

Researchers at Vanderbilt University have found that loud laughter is sexually arousing. Before you start cackling for cooze, however, be warned that women may find this sudden, inexplicable arousal unpleasant. Assistant professor Jo-Anne Bachorowski, who co-wrote the research report, suggests that "it may be more effective for a male to initially produce somewhat innocuous laughs at a fairly low rate, and to expand his laugh repertoire only in the course of a developing relationship." If this seems loony—or if you have no idea what the hell "laugh repertoire" means—buy her some pearls instead.

HER MAJESTY'S SECRET PERVERT

As the Brits say, it's a smalls world. A former member of the queen's elite Life Guards has revealed he tried to steal Elizabeth II's underwear. The incident occurred while he was clearing her private apartment after the 1992 fire at Windsor Castle. "Yes, I admit it. I was planning to steal a pair of the queen's knickers," he told the London press. "I pulled open a chest of drawers and was amazed to see it was filled with the queen's underwear and I put out my hand to take a pair. Suddenly, I realized she was standing right behind me, watching my every move." He hastily transferred the royal delicates into a satchel. The queen, he noted, "didn't say a word." She was probably breathless with excitement.

LIGHTNING RODS

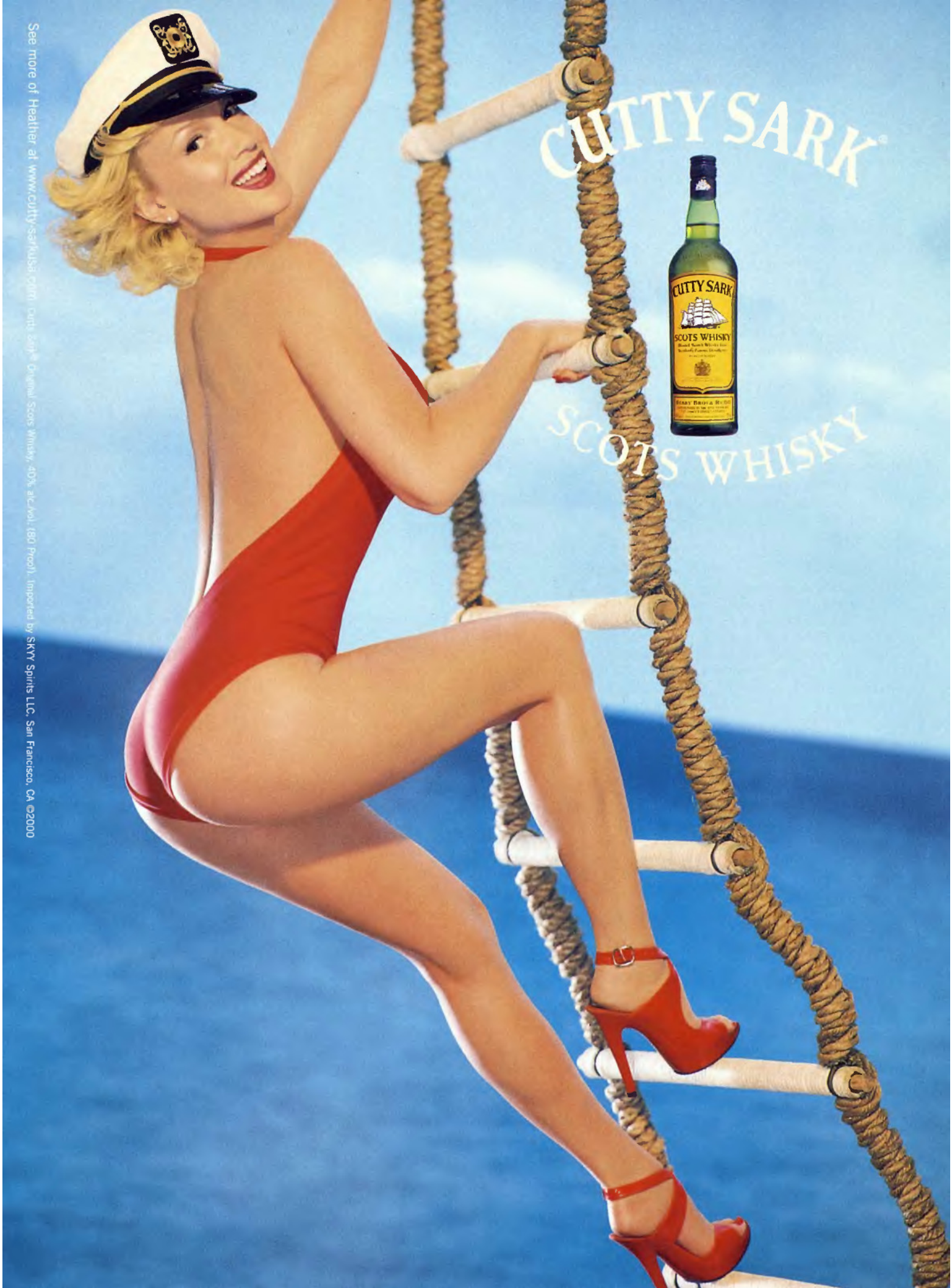
Nude surfing in Australia is a popular extreme sport. But reports from Sydney indicate it is dangerous for unexpected reasons. Officials claim that baggie-free surfers at Bondi Beach (especially men) attract lightning strikes. At least that keeps the sharks away.

DON'T WANT IT THAT WAY

Campus police at the University of Toronto turned to the music of the Backstreet Boys as a crowd-control tool more effective than tear gas. When students occupied the office of the university president to demand a campus ban on the sale of clothing made in Third World sweatshops, the police started to blare the Backstreet Boys at the windows. "This is probably the first time the Backstreet Boys have been deliberately used as a form of sleep deprivation torture," said one irked protestor.

BABE OF THE MONTH

Maria Grazia Cucinotta could be the most radiant Italian import since Sophia Loren and the Olivetti typewriter. Hailing from Messina, the 31-year-old *bella donna* is probably best known as the object of the postman's affection in *Il Pastino* and the cigar girl in *The World Is Not Enough*. Maria abandoned a modeling career at a young age because, she says, "I didn't like that they used only my image and not my head." With her understated early performances and her overwhelming cleavage, she won over the Italian public, who refer to her simply as La Cucinotta. Now she hopes to conquer America. She'll play a beautiful prostitute in the upcoming black comedy *Picking Up the Pieces*, starring Woody Allen, Sharon Stone and David Schwimmer. The Saucy One also likes working out and cooking Sicilian dishes for her appreciative friends. She says she's at her sexiest wandering beach towns in a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. That's an appealing image—all it lacks is a dip in the fountain.



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movies

By LEONARD MALTIN

BILLY CRUDUP'S natural likability is put to the test in ***Jesus' Son*** (Lions Gate), an adaptation of Denis Johnson's well-regarded book of short stories about a young man nicknamed FH (for Fuck Head) who's caught up in the drug culture of the Seventies. Crudup's charisma is essential to the film because there is no intrinsic reason to care about his character, nor his misadventures. He narrates the film in a nonlinear fashion, but the novelty wears off quickly, leaving us with a series of vignettes in which FH encounters various troubled characters (played, in cameos, by Denis Leary, Dennis Hopper and Holly Hunter), as well as the woman with whom he forms the closest thing to a lasting relationship in his life (Samantha Morton, an Oscar nominee this year for Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*). There are moments of humor and poignancy along the way, but not enough. ¥¥

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A mournful montage of lonely, disconnected people, ***Wonderland*** (USA Films) offers good performances and a strong sense of working-class London, but it seems to slip right through your fingers. Director Michael Winterbottom has great facility with fly-on-the-wall filmmaking, and screenwriter Laurence Coriat took his inspiration for this multicharacter saga from Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*. But tangible milieu and well-drawn characters don't add up to a movie. Among the anguished participants: an attractive working girl (Gina McKee from *Notting Hill*) who can't seem to hook up with a decent guy, her embittered mother and long-stifled father, a sister who's about to give birth, her husband who's panicking at the prospect and another sister (Shirley Henderson, who shone so brightly in Mike Leigh's *Topsy-Turvy*) who takes a what-the-hell attitude toward life, except where her son is concerned. I understand the term "slice of life," but this particular wedge has no aftertaste. ¥¥

Morton, Crudup: A moment of clarity.

Hamlet goes modern,
grass gets stomped,
Fellini is feted.

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The always-provocative filmmaker Peter Greenaway (*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*) calls his latest film, ***8½ Women*** (Lions Gate), an homage to Federico Fellini. I'm not sure the Italian director would be flattered. Fellini's *8½*, which this film's lead characters watch more than once, is an engulfing, engrossing masterpiece; *8½ Women*, on the other hand, is awful. John Standing plays a British business tycoon who lives in splendor in Geneva; when his wife dies, his son (Matthew Delamere) tries to help him through his grief by opening him up to new sexual experiences. Among the son's odd assortment of concubines: a former nun who hasn't completely abandoned her ascetic ways (Toni Collette), a horsewoman and pig fancier who now lives in an orthopedic corset (Amanda Plummer) and a sexual free spirit (Polly Walker). The nudity in this film, both male and female, is casual and copious, but even that isn't enough to maintain interest in such a long, pretentious, boring piece of tripe. ¥

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Look out: Hamlet has a gun. Given the contemporary setting of ***Hamlet*** (Miramax) in New York City, that's not so surprising. But does he also have to wear

BEWARE THE FESTIVAL EFFECT

Last year at the high-profile Sundance Film Festival, specialized film distributors engaged in a bidding war for rights to one of the competition's genuine sleepers, a clever comedy called *Happy, Texas*, starring Jeremy Northam, Steve Zahn, Illeana Douglas, Ally Walker, Ron Perlman and William H. Macy. Filmmaker Mark Illsley had raised the feature's $1.4 million budget himself, calling on relatives and friends, and submitted the movie cold to Sundance.

He then became the object of serious wooing by most of the major players in what used to be called the art-film arena, but he had decided early on that he would not succumb to the fattest checkbook. He wanted his distributor to have a game plan for treating the film with the TLC it deserved, even if it meant sacrificing a few dollars. Miramax came through with both money and a prospectus. What's more, the distributor agreed to release the film just as it was.

That isn't how it turned out. Miramax proposed to Illsley that he gather his troops for reshoots to smooth out the film's rough edges, and suggested using a different score as well. Illsley, a young industry veteran making his directing debut, agreed. But even after the changes were made—with some 20 minutes reshot—the movie opened with a perfunctory (and, some thought, ineffectual) advertising campaign last fall and quickly disappeared. Why would the rug be pulled on a film that seemed so promising? Perhaps it can be chalked up to the Festival Effect. So many dramatic and documentary films are screened at Sundance that audiences—including many industry professionals—start yearning for something that is genuinely good. (The same is true for any festival, be it Toronto or Telluride.) And if you've just slogged through three, four, five or 11 mediocre movies, you're liable to overreact to anything even remotely good.

Throughout the year, critics who don't get to all the festivals tout upcoming theatrical releases with phrases like "shown to great acclaim at last year's Toronto Film Festival" or "greeted with a standing ovation at the Sundance Film Festival."

I've been there; I know how one can get caught up in the excitement of discovery, and the desire to cheer on a promising movie, especially if the filmmaker is in attendance and seems sincere. Sometimes, it takes a showing away from the festival ambience to reveal a film's true colors.

As for *Happy, Texas*, it should have found a bigger audience; it's a very likable film. But then, that's what home video is for. —L.M.

IS THAT A REMOTE IN YOUR POCKET

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COLUMBIA TRISTAR HOME VIDEO

Pollak: Working actor, retired comic.

OFF CAMERA

After two decades of performing stand-up comedy, **Kevin Pollak** felt he had finally left his former profession behind and become a full-fledged actor when he turned down a lucrative gig this past New Year's Eve. I suspect audiences made that adjustment even sooner. Following his breakthrough co-starring role in Barry Levinson's *Avalon* in 1990, Pollak carved out a prolific career as a supporting actor in film after film: *LA Story*, *A Few Good Men*, *Grumpy Old Men* (and its sequel), *Indian Summer*, *The Usual Suspects* and *Casino*, to name just a few. He recently tackled his first bona fide starring role, as the president of the U.S., no less, in Rod Lurie's *Deterrence*, and appeared in *The Whole Nine Yards* with Bruce Willis; among his upcoming releases are *Steal This Movie!* and *The Wedding Planner*. One of Pollak's mentors was the busiest character actor of the Eighties, the late J.T. Walsh, whom he met while shooting *A Few Good Men*. Having no formal acting training, the comedian discussed technique with Walsh. Walsh told him, "Less is good. Nothing is better." Pollak's forte during his comedy-club years was doing impressions; now he uses that skill for fun. "Nothing delights me more than calling my agent's new assistant and pretending to be Alan Arkin," he says, lapsing into his dead-on imitation of the veteran actor. He once left a message on Arkin's machine—as Arkin—momentarily confusing the actor as to whether he'd actually left a message for himself. When I asked Pollak which film people most often mention when they stop him on the street, he told me that there is no one picture that stands out—which he rightly takes as a high compliment. As often as not, people simply tell him, "You do good work." And he does. —L.M.

a dorky ski cap? That's one of the less impressive touches in Michael Almereyda's adaptation of Shakespeare (as opposed to, say, much of the action taking place in the Hotel Elsinore). What can we say about a production in which the actor playing Hamlet is the weakest one in the ensemble? Ethan Hawke certainly has the brooding part down cold, but every time he's on-screen with Kyle MacLachlan (a youngish but commanding Claudius), Liev Schreiber (Laertes) or even Julia Stiles (an impressive Ophelia), the other actors demand our attention. This modern-day Hamlet offers no new insights to the timeless tale, nor is there a clever-enough slant to justify the 21st century trappings. Having seen it once, I hope to look upon it no more. ¥¥

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Grass (Unapix) purports to be a documentary about the U.S. government's attitude toward marijuana. In fact, it's a sermon that preaches to the converted. Narrated (inevitably) by Woody Harrelson, *Grass* does have interesting information to impart, about the way the notorious plant was first brought to this country (by Mexican immigrants, in the early 20th century) and the lengths to which longtime drug czar Harry J. Anslinger would go in his war on pot. But I was disturbed by filmmaker Ron Mann's implication that such familiar, cheesy Thirties exploitation films as *Marihuana* and *Reefer Madness* were propaganda films authorized or encouraged into being by the feds. (In fact, films like *Reefer Madness* titillated their audiences with forbidden fruit and then tried to justify their existence by warning against the evils of narcotics.) With its lively editing style, cutting-edge graphics and eclectic song score, *Grass* is an innocuous piece of entertainment. But it's somewhat dubious as a historical document. ¥¥

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In France, ***An Affair of Love*** (Fine Line) had the more provocative title *A Pornographic Affair*. In the first scene of the film, Nathalie Baye (as beautiful and charismatic as ever) tells an off-camera interviewer about her liaison with a man (Sergi Lopez) who answered a magazine ad for someone willing to help her enact a specific sex fantasy. She says, matter-of-factly, that the relationship was "pornographique," which in her mind means strictly sexual. Although we never see the fantasy, we watch the two strangers as they meet at a cafe, repair to a nearby hotel room and then, after some weeks of this ritual, debate whether to take the next step and get to know each other. Simple and understated, Frédéric Fonteyne's film (from a script by Philippe Blasband) reminds us how fragile any relationship can be—whether or not sex plays a crucial role. ¥¥¥

MOVIE SCORE CARD

capsule close-ups of current films by leonard maltin

An Affair of Love (See review) French beauty Nathalie Baye finds a partner (Spanish star Sergi Lopez) to help fulfill a sexual fantasy but is fearful of falling in love. ¥¥¥

The Big Kahuna (Reviewed 6/00) Kevin Spacey stars with Danny DeVito in this vibrant, filmed stage play about world-weary traveling salesmen. ¥¥¥

East Is East (6/00) This acclaimed British tragicomedy stars Om Puri as a Pakistani who can't deal with the fact that his seven children—raised in England with a British mom—don't want to follow his customs. ¥¥¥½

8½ Women (See review) A young man takes his widowed father on a sexual odyssey involving a bizarre bevy of women. The latest from filmmaker Peter Greenaway is, sad to say, a big bore. ¥

Gladiator (Listed only) Russell Crowe is terrific in Ridley Scott's epic about a Roman gladiator who bides his time to exact revenge on his emperor. Classically beautiful Connie Nielsen is his lost love. Entertainment on a grand scale. ¥¥¥

Grass (See review) Woody Harrelson narrates this self-satisfied documentary about the history of marijuana in the U.S. and the government's longtime war against the evil weed. ¥¥

Hamlet (See review) Ethan Hawke plays the moody prince in this slick but empty retread of Shakespeare set in modern-day New York City. ¥¥

Jesus' Son (See review) Billy Crudup plays a slacker who recalls his adventures and encounters from the drug scene of the Seventies. ¥¥

Joe Gould's Secret (6/00) The look and feel of New York in the Forties is beautifully captured by director Stanley Tucci in this adaptation of *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell's profile of a rumpled street savant, played magnificently by Ian Holm. ¥¥¥

Love and Basketball (6/00) Saga of a boy and girl who grow up as neighbors, then competitors and finally lovers, in this crowd-pleasing film. ¥¥¥

The Virgin Suicides (5/00) Close-knit sisters are swept up in a bleak fate that mesmerizes four boys in Seventies suburbia. Sofia Coppola's adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel doesn't quite come off. ¥¥½

Wonderland (See review) A look at working-class Brits over the course of a weekend. There's a great feel for the characters and their lives, but there's no story. ¥¥

¥¥¥¥ Don't miss ¥¥ Worth a look
¥¥¥ Good show ¥ Forget it

GUEST SHOT

"I don't have a favorite movie," says **Vince McMahon**, chairman of the World Wrestling Federation, "but I'm easily entertained. In my business, I have to think a lot, so when I watch a movie, I don't want to have to think through a plot. I thought *Eyes Wide Shut* was the worst damn movie I sat through in a long time. I hated it. I like comedies, especially *Austin Powers* and all of Jim Carrey's movies." —SUSAN KARLIN

COMIC STRIPPING

The X-Men puts the Y chromosome in theaters this month, heralding a comic book–to-movie trend that will continue with Silver Surfer, Wonder Woman, Fantastic Four, the Hulk and Spider-Man. Of course, these cinema superheroes have superancestors.

Batman (1989): Tim Burton's dark vision of the Dark Knight put the goth in Gotham City, made a twisted hero of the Joker and gave wings to an increasingly cumbersome franchise. Number five is on the way. We still like the camp of the 1966 quartet-of-villains version.

Superman (1978): Inventive action setpieces raised the standard for late-Seventies spectacle. John Williams' Oscar-nominated score won a Grammy.

The Punisher (1989): Vigilante cop Dolph Lundgren's résumé already has a body count of 125 when the movie opens, and he puts it out of reach by the finale. Brutal action, worth a rental.

Darkman (1990): Not inspired by a comic book, but in the hands of director Sam Raimi, it seems as if it should have been. Liam Neeson steps out of his straight drama persona to play a hideously disfigured scientist bent on revenge.

Barb Wire (1996): Vituperative vixen Pam Anderson Lee in stiletto heels and leather is the heroine in this rousing—and arousing—campy romp. The plot is inspired by, no kidding, *Casablanca*.

Swamp Thing (1982): Before his address changed to Elm Street, director Wes Craven slummed in the swamp, with a dripping human vegetable wooing wet-T-shirted Adrienne Barbeau. What plant are you from, anyway?

Blade (1998): Sharp-edged, fast-moving, neck-sucking saga has vampire hunter Wesley Snipes taking hits of liquid garlic amid effective trappings of German Expressionism in this fan favorite. Look for the sequel next year.

Spawn (1997): Hell hath no fury like Michael Jai White scorned. White makes a deal with Satan to crash the pearly gates, but a moral crisis makes him just say no. No smarts to spare but eye candy to burn.

The Crow (1994): Drenched in feedbacky music and photographed almost entirely with a strobe light, this nightmarish revenge flick is still best known for the accidental death of Brandon Lee.

Hero at Large (1980): John Ritter, trying to break away from *Three's Company*'s wispy Jack Tripper, plays an actor mistaken for a superhero, carrying on the charade to the painful end. Small film, big heart.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1990): Admit it, you laughed when you first saw it. Admit it, it was the ganja.

Sgt. Kabukiman NYPD (1990): A cult favorite. Policeman Rick Gianasi develops peculiar crime-fighting powers when he transforms into the made-up, kimono-garbed superhero of the title. Lethal chopsticks, anyone? —BUZZ MCCLAIN

DISC ALERT

Zalman King's ***Red Shoe Diaries*** is among cable TV's most dependably erotic series and merits the polished treatment Showtime lavished on its two recent DVD releases ($25). There are, for example, the revealing outtakes featuring Arielle Dambasle and *Red Shoe*'s other beautiful actresses, plus delightful slide-show photo-

GUILTY PLEASURE OF THE MONTH

In case you missed the History Channel's series ***The History of Sex,*** it's now out as a four-volume set (New Video). We, of course, have a vested interest in the subject and were pleased by the producers' diligence and zeal. We weren't surprised when they asked for our expertise, and you'll find quite a few appearances by Hef and James R. Petersen (author of *The Century of Sex: Playboy's History of the Sexual Revolution*). It's a highly watchable documentary for when you're not engaging in the pursuit of the subject yourself.

to galleries. We're thankful the producers put the money into the DVD's content rather than trimming its conventional polypropylene case in red faux patent leather. If asked to name their favorite Woody Allen film, most fans will answer with one from the Seventies. A new boxed set (MGM, $135) collects all eight of Allen's efforts from that period, each with its original theatrical trailer. From the purely comic films—*Bananas* (1971), *Sleeper* (1973)—to the more complex works—*Annie Hall* (1977), *Interiors* (1978)—it's a wonderful Woodypalooza. —GREGORY P. FAGAN

video mood meter

MOOD	MOVIE
ACTION	***Any Given Sunday*** (showy QB Foxx battles Pacino for football's soul; Oliver Stone's hyperviolence draws a flag for piling on). ***Galaxy Quest*** (aging TV-show stars get to save space for real; more knowing and fun than you might expect).
SCENIC DRAMA	***The Talented Mr. Ripley*** (con man Damon swipes rich-boy pal Jude Law's life; fine update of Clement's *Purple Noon*). ***Snow Falling on Cedars*** (lingering xenophobia and failed love form drifts on a Fifties murder trial; broody, but lush).
BIOGRAPHY	***The Hurricane*** (as Rubin Carter, Denzel Washington is the ultimate wrongly incarcerated man; a dazzling hagiography). ***Man on the Moon*** (Carrey and director Milos Forman do nutty Kaufman brilliant justice; you still may ask why).
SLEEPER	***Cradle Will Rock*** (Thirties thespians rally to save the federal theater project; frenetic, but a great cast and story). ***All About My Mother*** (woman on the verge of finding her dead son's transsexual dad; director Almodóvar's Oscar-winning best).
FAMILY	***Anna and the King*** (Chow Yun Fat and Jodie Foster as a revisionist *King and I*; better as intrigue than romance). ***Bicentennial Man*** (Asimov's domestic android has a hunger to be human; Williams needs a slap from *Star Trek*'s Data).

music

ROCK

PANTERA'S 1992 *Vulgar Display of Power* set the standard for Nineties metal to come: Limp Bizkit, Korn, Tool and all the others who dispense almost entirely with melody. Pantera now returns with ***Reinventing the Steel*** (Elektra). Singer Phil Anselmo screams really well. And Dimebag Darrell, a hero to all who worship at the throne of metal guitar, riffs relentlessly. Can they reclaim their old territory in a new millennium when they sing *Yesterday Don't Mean Shit*? I predict they can. It's good shit, particularly in the production, where they nail the details. For those who prefer their metal more Seventies-style—with melody in the screaming, swing in the drumming and a little chime in the riffing—I recommend AC/DC's latest entry, ***Stiff Upper Lip*** (Elektra). This comes closer to *Back in Black*, one of the great hard rock albums, than anything they've done since. Critics have always complained that AC/DC does the same old thing. While their sound hasn't changed, their hooks have varied widely. This batch has massive hooks. —CHARLES M. YOUNG

Pantera: Reinventing steel.

Pantera puts the pedal to the metal, Chumbawamba chants more and trip-hop hypnotizes.

Jimmy Page has been trying to recapture the spirit of Led Zeppelin over the past decade, working with David Coverdale and Page's old partner Robert Plant as well as Puff Daddy and an Arabian orchestra. In retrospect, teaming up with Atlanta's Black Crowes, who have been trying to update blues rock, seems like a logical, if risky, idea. One listen to ***Jimmy Page and the Black Crowes Live at the Greek*** (Musicmaker.com) proves the risk paid off spectacularly. Page sounds reborn, ecstatically reeling off Zep licks and gritty solos that often top the originals. The Crowes also deliver the performance of their lives on these 19 tracks, almost all of which are taken from the Zep catalog. And Chris Robinson's edgy, raunchy vocals are much closer to the bluesy source of the music than Plant's ever were. *Greek* is available online from Musicmaker.com. You can custom-order one or two CDs, choosing the tracks, and Musicmaker will send them to you formatted in any order you want. Get the full set, and fast. —VIC GARBARINI

Maybe you loved it, maybe you hated it, but you remember Chumbawamba's pub chant *Tubthumping*. The creators of this novelty turned out to be English anarchists who'd been making records since they got pissed at Live Aid. But though the *Tubthumper* album was noisy fun, the single was sui generis, and that was that. Not hardly. Chumbawamba's ***WYSIWYG*** (Republic), which stands for What You See Is What You Get, raises them a level, with 22 infectious send-ups of U.S. and UK culture—both pop and political. The lyrics of *I'm With Stupid* and *Dumbing Down* insist too confidently on everyone else's idiocy, but that doesn't mean you won't laugh and hum along. I wouldn't put it past Chumbawamba to generate more pub chants. If you're hooked, spring for the band's expensive but even more entertaining ***Uneasy Listening*** compilation (EMI UK), which proves they've been writing catchy lyrics for a long time. —ROBERT CHRISTGAU

Olive's debut, ***Trickle*** (Maverick/Warner Bros.), is more lighthearted and song oriented than most progressive trip-hop. The group, which includes Simply Red's keyboardist-trumpeter Tim Kellett and singer Ruth Ann, toys with the hypnotic textures typical of the style (*Smile, Trust You*), while seeming more accessible and melodic. *Love Affair* is radio-friendly without trying to pander. *I'm Not in Love* keeps the commercial spine of the 10CC chestnut while adding double-time rhythm patterns that make it sound contemporary. Ruth Ann has a bright, pliant voice that fights against Kellett's dark arrangements, creating a tension that enhances the album.

—NELSON GEORGE

HIP-HOP

"My brain makes the earth dark/But I'm hung like a birthmark/I like to suck toes/Yours secrete fructose." Thus does MC Paul Barman commence the 20-minute pussy-quest ***It's Very Stimulating*** (WordSound). A protégé of Prince Paul, Barman is a nerdy white guy who wishes he were a pimp but isn't. Instead, he pursues girls with rhymes as unlikely and inventive as any hip-hop has seen.

—ROBERT CHRISTGAU

COUNTRY

Steve Earle, a fine recording artist, songwriter, touring musician, record producer and label honcho, also makes his mark as a political activist. He has become a prominent spokesman against the death penalty. ***Transcendental Blues*** (E-Squared) adds a more explicitly Irish approach to Earle's usual blend of country, rock, bluegrass and blues. Its most successful songs are moody, like *The Galway Girl*, *Halo 'Round the Moon* and *I Don't Want to Lose You Yet*. The last of these contains his best new aphorism: "Maybe we'll pass this way again/But honey, I don't want to wait till then." But the album's most important and transcendent number is *Jonathan's Song*, which feels like a literal account of what Jonathan Nobles said to Earle as they awaited together Nobles' 1998 execution in Texas. It's totally unsentimental: "I suppose I got it comin'," begins the most haunting verse—and without ever raising his voice, Earle condemns the system that replaces justice and rehabilitation with an overwhelming urge for revenge. The song sits at the end of the disc, so you can hit repeat and get back to the title track as quickly as possible, just to remember that life is actually to be lived.

Marah's ***Kids in Philly*** (E-Squared) is the debut album by a Philadelphia quartet that's supposed to be alt-country but sounds like the early E Street Band, with a banjo, to these ears. Dave Bielanko's raspy voice (reminiscent of Ronnie Lane of the Faces) and searing, elementary harp playing are the centerpiece. The songs are high-energy tales of reckless romantic abandon. —DAVE MARSH

Jimmie Dale Gilmore's stretched vibrato is reminiscent of country legend Webb Pierce, and it serves as a conduit for all kinds of songs. That's what makes ***One Endless Night*** (Windcharger) unique. Gilmore tackles material as diverse as the John Hiatt anthem *Your Love Is My Rest* and the typically finger-snapping *Mack the Knife*, which Gilmore and co-producer Buddy Miller recast as a haunting ballad. *One Endless Night* is cast as a "my favorite songs" project, so Gilmore only wrote three of the 13 tracks himself. But what matters is that the Hal Ketchum–Gilmore collaboration, *Blue Shadow*, is a winner. —DAVE HOEKSTRA

fast tracks

BILLION DOLLAR BABIES DEPARTMENT: The **Jacksons**—including **Michael**—are mulling over a billion dollar offer for a reunion tour. Would you go?

REELING AND ROCKING: **Usher** does Disney. Look for the singer in his next role as a world-class skateboarder and computer hacker in *The Famous Jett Jackson* on the Disney Channel. . . . **Brandy** is considering a remake of *A Star Is Born* with **Jamie Foxx.** . . . **Bette Midler** is going to prime time in the fall with a sitcom, *Bette*. . . . If you're traveling in England and go to Liverpool, expect to see major road signs saying, "Liverpool welcomes you to the birthplace of the **Beatles.**" . . . **Dave Stewart** has teamed up with **Belinda Carlisle's** husband, **Morgan Mason,** and others to start a cable channel called Innergy in Europe. It probably wouldn't surprise you to know that **Deepak Chopra** is involved. . . . **Ice Cube** will star in **John Carpenter's** *Ghosts of Mars*, a science fiction thriller set in the future. Look for Martian ghosts.

NEWSBREAKS: **Jimmie Van Zant** is following his **Lynyrd Skynyrd** cousins into music with the album *Southern Comfort*. . . . **Eagle-Eye Cherry,** working with **Rick Rubin,** expects to have his sophomore CD in stores this summer. . . . **Roger Waters'** six-week tour will continue through July 16. . . . Look for a **Peter Gabriel** tribute CD any day. . . . **Perry Farrell's** next CD, *The Diamond Jubilee*, is due at the end of the summer. . . . **Lit** plans to record a compilation of silly love songs called *Covers for Lovers* with help from punk, ska and hair bands from the Eighties. . . . The White House Millennium Council invited **Aretha** to contribute ideas for items to be placed in a time capsule. She selected *Respect* because "it relates to all people, as it is basic and fundamental to mankind." The capsule will be sealed by **Hillary Clinton** and Congress later this year. . . . The Recording Industry Association of America has awarded **Simon and Garfunkel** a diamond award for *Greatest Hits*, the best-selling album by a duo. . . . Want to dedicate to the one you love? Visit thisisdedicatedto.com and select from 2000 oldies, free. . . . If all the paperwork clears, you can own a piece of the House of Blues in a public stock offering. . . . OK, now we've heard it all: Voyage, a London boutique, is selling jeans for nearly $5000 a pair. Calling them couture pants doesn't change a thing as far as we're concerned. If you're after the silly side of fashion, look for them in New York sometime this year. . . . For nostalgia buffs: *Live at the Fillmore East* (Thunder's Mouth Press), by **Amalie Rothschild** with a foreword by the **Dead's Mickey Hart,** chronicles in photos the years 1968 to 1971, when the East Village rock spot was the place to be. Torn down now, the memories linger: The **Who** premiered *Tommy* there, **Janis** knocked the socks off the patrons after signing with CBS, **Hendrix** played New Year's Eve—and Rothschild got almost 20,000 shots, the best of which appear in *Live*. . . . **Slipknot, Sevendust** and **Coal Chamber** join rock, tattoo and body artists at the first rock-and-ink traveling festival, Tattoo the Earth. . . . The BBC's giant karaoke sing-along of **Lou Reed's** *Perfect Day* was one of 5000 events that were part of the Music Live Festival. . . . A first for Birkenstock: The sandal maker unveiled limited editions of two styles of shoes featuring **Jerry Garcia's** artwork. Two percent of the proceeds will go to Drawbridge, an arts program for homeless children. The sandals run about $80. Jerry lives on in his music and his doodles. —BARBARA NELLIS

ROCK METER

	Christgau	Garbarini	George	Marsh	Young
Chumbawamba *WYSIWYG*	8	7	9	8	8
Steve Earle *Transcendental Blues*	8	7	8	10	7
No. Miss. All Stars *Shake Hands With Shorty*	7	8	8	6	8
Olive *Trickle*	6	6	8	7	6
Pantera *Reinventing the Steel*	1	5	6	7	7

Johnny Staats drives a truck in West Virginia, but he won't keep his day job for long. As a master mandolin picker, he merges Bill Monroe with Eric Clapton. You don't have to love bluegrass to enjoy Staats' debut album, ***Wires and Wood*** (Giant). —LEOPOLD FROEHLICH

R&B

There have been only a few collaborations of established stars in R&B. In hip-hop, guest rhymes are so commonplace they barely merit attention. So the creation of Lucy Pearl by Tony Toni Tone's Raphael Saadiq and ex–En Vogue member Dawn Robinson is as unique as it is exciting. On ***Lucy Pearl*** (Pookie/Beyond) the group is too conscious of its pedigree, but Saadiq's laid-back tenor and Robinson's emoting on *I Can't Stand Your Mother* and *Good Love* are worth waiting for. This is a fine start for a new trio (with DJ Ali Shaheed Muhammad). Look for Lucy Pearl to blossom on its second album. —NELSON GEORGE

BLUES

Memphis producer Jim Dickinson and his two sons were so taken with the mesmerizing electric blues coming out of the Mississippi hill country that they moved there. The idea was to soak up sound from great artists like Junior Kimbrough and R.L. Burnside. Guitarist Luther and his drummer brother, Cody, along with bassist Chris Chew, studied with the masters on their home turf, and formed the North Mississippi All Stars. Their debut release, ***Shake Hands With Shorty*** (Tone-Cool), is innovative blues. The Dickinsons take gutbucket boogie and shuffle and attack it with postpunk urgency and fervor. —VIC GARBARINI

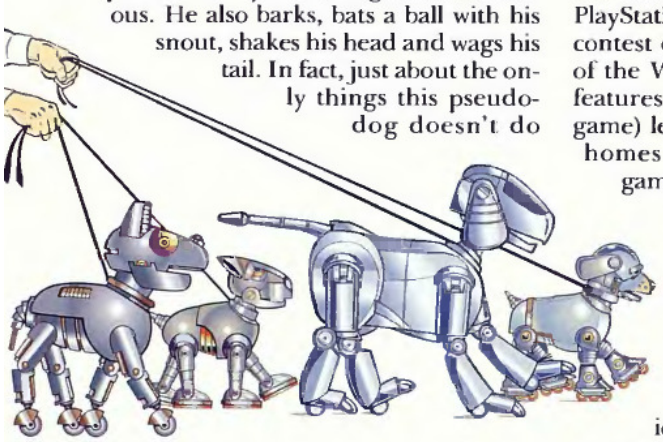
Alvin Youngblood-Hart started out sounding like a country-blues purist. But ***Start With the Soul*** (Hannibal) opens with *Fightin' Hard*, set to grungy power-trio riffs, and it stays in that groove. *A Prophet's Mission* and *Maxwell Street Jimmy* are classic blues in every way. At the end, Hart asks *Will I Ever Get Back Home?* with a Howlin' Wolf yodel, and you have to wonder what makes him think he ever left. —DAVE MARSH

CLASSICAL

Anton Webern was the most concise and modern composer of the 20th century. With the release of the six-CD ***Complete Webern*** (Deutsche Grammophon), conductor Pierre Boulez also proves that Webern was one of the century's greatest composers. —LEOPOLD FROEHLICH

ROBOT ROVERS BREED

How popular is Sony's robot dog, Aibo? The company has 135,000 back orders—and it's no wonder. We recently spent a day with the $2500 computerized pooch and were blown away by his impressive behavior. As advanced as electronic toys get, Aibo has a 64-bit RISC processor and 16 megabytes of internal memory, all of which allow him to respond to movement and voice commands. (Aibo expresses six emotions—joy, anger, sadness, surprise, fear and discontent—with flashing red eyes, sound and movement.) Take Aibo's ball away and he gets pissed, red eyes flashing fast and furious. He also barks, bats a ball with his snout, shakes his head and wags his tail. In fact, just about the only things this pseudo-dog doesn't do



BUC ROGERS

are eat and poop (though he will, on occasion, lift his hind leg as if to take a leak). Sony even offers the Aibo Performer Kit, a CD-ROM that allows owners to create original behaviors and sounds for their Aibo. And because Aibo uses Sony's Memory Stick format, owners can swap tricks through e-mail or download them from a growing number of fan sites. Given the interest in Aibo, we're not surprised a litter of robotic canines is on the way. Tiger Electronics offers two robot pets. The first, i-Cybie, was developed in conjunction with Silverlit, a Hong Kong–based manufacturer of interactive toys. Priced at $120, it recognizes 12 voice commands, including "speak" and "roll over." I-Cybie also comes with a remote (like Aibo) for push-button control. The second, called Poo-Chi, is a $28 palm-size pup that responds to light, sound and touch by wagging his tail and barking. Poo-Chi's eyes flash red like Aibo's, but are heart-shaped and less menacing. Fisher-Price recently unveiled a canine copy that looks like the runt of an Aibo litter. The $100 smart toy is cute, with big eyes. And if you're looking for something a little cuddlier than these hard plastic pets, MGA Entertainment makes a plush voice-recognition electronic pup called Me and My Shadow. The furry pooch comes in three colors (chocolate, beige and black) and responds to nine commands, including "tug-of-war" (which causes it to shake a toy bone), "speak" and "come" ($60).

—BETH TOMKIW

WHOOP ASS LIKE WILLIS

The Academy snubbed him for yet another year, but a new video game and accompanying nationwide contest suggests that nobody dies harder than Bruce Willis—or at least a Bruce Willis franchise. This summer, to promote the release of Die Hard Trilogy 2: Viva Las Vegas (for PlayStation and PC), Fox Interactive and contest co-sponsor Jones Soda (makers of the Whoop Ass energy drink, which features prominently in the plot of the game) let loose with tricked-out mobile homes packed with food and video games. The plan is to track down the nation's best Die Hard gamer. And if you can outlast the competition during a public DH2 marathon in your city, you can walk away from the wreckage with some pretty hot prizes, including a DVD player (with, of course, copies of the *Die Hard* flicks). If the van doesn't stop in your neighborhood, you can win these and other prizes (including strategy guides and exclusive cheat codes) at online contests at the Jones Soda website. Check out all the details at jonessoda.com. —JOEL ENOS

GAME OF THE MONTH

Sega's **Crazy Taxi** lets you play kamikaze cabbie on a variety of obstacle-ridden courses—with tunes by Offspring and Bad Religion blaring in the background. Converted from the arcade game of the same name, this Dreamcast title puts you in the driver's seat of a taxi and challenges you to deliver as many fares as possible before the clock counts down. Each successful delivery buys extra time and adds money to your total. To earn big tips, you'll need to impress passengers with plenty of giant jumps and clever shortcuts before dumping them at the cable car station or Kentucky Fried Chicken. —JASON BUHRMESTER

WILD THINGS

When Palm Computing gave us a preview of the sleek Palm V in our Chicago offices more than a year ago, the company had no plans to introduce a color variation. Now, judging from the rainbow-hued display on the Palm IIIc ($450, pictured here), its plans have changed. Only a few early applications for the Palm IIIc take full advantage of the new colors. Among them are the Chroma-Games, chess, backgammon and checkers (available at white horsegames.com); an enhanced calculator called power-One; and Album to Go, a digital photo viewer from Club Photo. But Palm Computing tells us many more are on the way. FYI: Palm's reps won't comment on whether the company will give color displays to the slicker Palm V or Palm VII models. But judging from all the vibrant handheld competitors running Microsoft's Windows CE platform (including Compaq's Aero and Casio Cassiopeia), it's just a matter of time. Our favorite add-on for the Palm IIIc is Kodak's PalmPix. The clip-on camera takes full-color 24-bit VGA shots and has a 2x digital zoom ($179). —B.T.

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 170.

Send this postcard to someone who may need to be reminded of the finer things in life. (Yourself if applicable.)

(FOLD HERE)

Margaritaville is not responsible for any jobs vacated due to the inspirational nature of this postcard.
(Objects in picture are closer than they appear.)

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PREMIUM MEXICAN TEQUILA

QUENCH YOUR SOUL BUT DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD. AND IF YOU'RE UNDER 21, BE PATIENT

living online

By MARK FRAUENFELDER

ALMOST INSTANT GRATIFICATION

The worst thing about shopping online is waiting to get your stuff. Here comes **Kozmo.com**, an online service that promises to deliver videos, books, CDs, games, magazines and food in an hour or less. I registered, entering my credit card number and an offer code for two free videos from a Kozmo promotional card that I'd received in the mail. In addition to the videos, I ordered an Autumn Greens Salad ($4.50), a Roasted Chicken Bolo ($4.99) and a Turkey Wedge Sandwich ($4.99). I hit the confirmation button, noting the time: 5:50 P.M. I was supposed to get e-mail confirming the order, but it never arrived. Fortunately, the food and the videos did, at 6:15. A chipper deliveryman in a blinding orange uniform handed me my order along with a receipt, indicating that $24.33 had been charged to my Visa card. Wait a minute—Kozmo charged me for the free videos. I pointed out the problem to the deliveryman. He shrugged good-naturedly and suggested that I call the toll-free number on the receipt. First, though, my wife and I sat down to eat the food, which was excellent. The salad had nuts, dried cranberries and blue cheese on it, and the bread was fresh and chewy. I phoned Kozmo the next morning and they agreed to credit my account for the overcharge, no problem.

When I tried to log on to Kozmo to make sure I got the credit (and to find out where the nearest video drop box is situated), I was greeted by an error message: "The Mall/Store is currently experiencing problems. Please try again later. User Initialization Failure. Invalid user cookie. The user may be logged in from more than one browser." Huh? I took a stab at the problem by opening my browser's cookies manager and deleting the kozmo.com cookie. When I tried logging in again, it worked. I confirmed that my video credits were waiting for me in my account, and I found a video drop-off close enough to walk to. My trip through Kozmo was riddled with bugs, but I'll undoubtedly pay a return visit the next time I'm in the mood for a video.

NexTag.com
2000 Shar
Nextag ID # 7
General Item
Avg. User
Log In
REMEMBER ME (what's this?)
Don't SURF the Web. Spyonit!
Sign Up Now to change the way you use the Internet or Learn More about Spyonit.com!
what's new
buzz
How Stuff Works
by Marshall Brain
www.howstuffworks.com
HSW Home
Newsletter
Search
Q of the Day
What's New
Contact
Sponsored by
at CarTrackers.com
How a Car Engine Works
Marshall Brain
TELL A FRIEND
Have you ever opened the hood of your car and wondered what was going on in there? Car engines can look like a big confusing jumble of metal, belts and wires to the uninitiated. You might want to know what's going on in there simply out of curiosity. After all, you ride in your car every day - wouldn't it be nice to know how it works? Or maybe you are tired of going to the
Compression
MEET JUDY
CLASSES
RECIPES
CALENDAR
FLORENCE
TUSCANY
FRIENDS
LE LEZIONI — What's Cookin' with Judy
Divina Cucina
What's Cookin' with Judy
Discover the art of eating and cooking with your own custom culinary program in Tuscany. Come and enjoy hands-on cooking lessons in small groups, never more than 6 students. Let Judy be your Italian life coach and give you a real taste of living in Tuscany.
La Divina Cucina is flexible. Each class is unique and inspired by the freshest ingredients from the market. We'll shop together and create the menu as we go. Often the market vendors will share new recipes to inspire our day.
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Enter up to 10 different stocks you want to track, and Company Sleuth (**companysleuth.com**) will build a custom page with links to related news stories, insider trading, message boards, patents and litigation and analyst reports. It's a fantastic way to follow a particular company. One caveat about investment message boards: The places are crawling with touts who slam stocks they've shorted, or who "pump and dump"—that is, praise a stock in hopes of running up the price before selling it. You can also sign up for a Company Sleuth daily e-mail report tailored to your portfolio.

NO HAGGLE, NO HASSLE CAR BUYING

Unlike most car sales sites, which require a dealer callback, CarsDirect (**carsdirect.com**) gives you instant quotes. You don't even need to enter your personal information—just select a make, model and options. Bang! There's your price. Usually, the quotes are lower than MSRP, but if the car you're drooling over is in short supply, the price could be several hundred, or even several thousand, dollars above suggested retail. If you find a price you like, Cars Direct will guarantee it after you put down $250. (It's returned when you buy the car.) And if you hate dealers as much as I do, you can arrange to have your new wheels delivered on a flatbed to your place.

CORPORATE ESPIONAGE

Thinking of jumping ship? Before you send your résumé to that company you want to work for, find out what insiders have to say about it at **Vault.com.** This site has reports on working conditions at more than a thousand corporations. The best part is the employee discussion boards, where you can catch up on rumors, salaries, layoffs, corporate culture and stock option plans for different companies. Here's what someone who claimed to work for America Online said about working there: "Eight A.M. to six P.M.? *(concluded on page 168)*

travel

SOMETHING SPACIOUS IN THE AIR

The skies are getting friendlier for airline passengers—and not just for those in the front of the plane. British Airlines recently introduced six-foot flatbed seats in business class on its JFK to London flights. And plans are in the works to feature them on all BA's North American routes by early 2002. This August, the airline will also inaugurate a fourth class of service, World Traveler Plus, from JFK, which will offer wider seats with more legroom. It's one step up from economy class. By the end of this year, Virgin Atlantic will have fully reclining seats in Upper Class. Private cabins with four-foot-wide double beds are in the planning stage. Other international airlines promoting first-class sleeper seats—arranged either individually or in pairs with privacy screens—include Air France, Lufthansa, Swissair, Japan, Cathay Pacific, All Nippon and Singapore. Singapore Airlines boasts that it has the largest personal video monitors (14 inches) and also offers hotel-style turn-down service for flights exceeding seven hours. Its Raffles (business) Class seats now have a 142-degree recline that's closer to horizontal than vertical, if you're mathematically challenged. The seats in Delta's Business Elite class tilt back just as far. US Airways' A330-300 planes made their debut on transatlantic flights this past May, with fully reclining sleepers in first class and more legroom in economy. United and American not only are adding international first-class sleepers, they've started coach wars as well. United just created Economy Plus by repositioning the first six to 11 rows on domestic planes, while American will increase legroom three inches on its entire fleet by mid-2001. —ANNE SPISELMAN

CHARLIE POWELL

NIGHT MOVES: MIAMI BEACH

In Miami Beach, beauty sleep is for suckers, so save the Zs for the ride home. Begin with drinks at the Delano (1685 Collins Avenue), Ian Schrager's swanky hotel. You'll drop 10 bucks a pop on cocktails, but the white-curtain lobby and gardens straight out of Lewis Carroll should not be missed. Follow up with martinis served in leopard-print glasses at Cheeky Monkey (944 Collins Avenue), the newest restaurant in Merv Griffin's Blue Moon Hotel. Then head across the street for outdoor dining at lush, eclectic Wish (801 Collins), or check out Astor Place (956 Washington Avenue) and chef Norman Van Aken's Beef Two Ways, a filet mignon on top of braised shredded short ribs. At the Middle Eastern restaurant Tantra (1445 Pennsylvania Avenue), belly dancers await, but skip dessert and smoke a cherry-flavored hookah instead. Clubbing? Prepare to wait behind velvet ropes unless you're a celebrity doppelgänger. The haute club of the moment is Level (1235 Washington Avenue), a cavernous oasis with three levels, four dance floors, nine bars and a 30-foot-tall glass-enclosed waterfall. Bar Room (320 Lincoln Road) is a paragon of glamour, with body-painted dancers everywhere, or join the disco-obsessed frenzy at Chaos (743 Washington Avenue). If you're tired of the uptown scene, spend an evening slumming it at Club Deuce (222 14th Street), where bikers and barflies shoot pool with models in perfect, smoky harmony. —NADINE EKREK

GREAT ESCAPE

GRACE BAY CLUB

The Turks and Caicos may sound like New York street gangs, but this British cluster of islands and cays only an hour and a half by air from Miami is a laid-back corner of the Caribbean that's still relatively undiscovered. The 12-mile stretch of beach pictured here, which fronts the Grace Bay Club on the island of Providenciales, resembles something out of *Robinson Crusoe*. But there's nothing primitive about the hacienda-style hotel, unless you think bedroom suites with private balconies, gourmet cuisine and room rates that begin at $375 per day add up to roughing it. If you must do something, Sunfish and Hobie Cats are complementary, and scuba diving, fishing and even a "romance picnic" to an unpopulated island can be arranged. For more information, go to gracebayclub.com. —DAVID STEVENS

ROAD STUFF

Victorinox by Swiss Army Brand has just introduced the Autotool (below), which houses 14 car-helpful gizmos, including pliers, ice scraper, digital tire-pressure gauge, fuse puller and flashlight, plus the usual screwdrivers, openers, etc. Price: $97. • If you regularly stay at Wyndham Hotels, ask about Wyndham by Request, a new information network that keeps track of loyal customers' preferences as to room type and location, beverages and snacks. Steady guests are rewarded with bonuses such as free movies. • Outdoor enthusiasts swear by Rynoskin, a lightweight, breathable insect protection suit that's meant to be worn underneath clothing. The material, which doesn't retain heat or water, protects against ticks, chiggers, flies, etc. A top and bottom are available for $60, and a hood or gloves for $13. You can choose from three looks: green, tan or camouflage. • The new *Exotic Dancer Directory* is available for $29.95 from ED Publications. Gentlemen's clubs are listed along with pertinent information on everything from the type of dancers to the dress codes. —D.S.

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 170.

books

GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THEIR FRIENDS

Before *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, before the screaming girls, Ed Sullivan, marriages, drugs, smart remarks and fame, John, Paul, George, Stu Sutcliffe, Pete Best and Ringo went to Germany. There, in the company of a bohemian crowd that included photographer Astrid Kirchherr and musician and artist Klaus Voormann, the boys gained confidence playing every night and turned themselves into the Beatles. Astrid and Klaus chronicled it, and now Govinda Gallery and Genesis Publications make it possible to buy a piece of history. ***Hamburg Days,*** a two-volume boxed set (in a limited edition of 2500) autographed by Kirchherr and Voormann, includes never-before-published photographs, original drawings, a foreword by George Harrison and a chronicle of those heady days. It can be yours for $465. To order, or for more information, call 800-775-1111. What will grab you instantly is that 40 years later, it's still a thrill to think of them then, tuning up—badly—in the Kaiserkeller, getting ready to do *Dizzy Miss Lizzy*. *Hamburg Days* is nostalgic but not sentimental. —BARBARA NELLIS

MAGNIFICENT OBSESSIONS

Traveling by Concorde is so last century. Everyone who is anyone knows the way to get from here to there these days is in a Sixties-throwback Airstream trailer. Invented by Wolly Byam, the silver Airstreams (so dubbed because they glide along the highway) are kitschy enaugh to earn points in Hallywaad (Sean Penn owns one) and sleek enaugh ta please any gadget guy. Though the text of ***Airstream: The History of the Land Yacht*** (Chronicle) is mastly directionless, the photos make yau want to jump an the silver-bullet bandwagon. If reading about driving cross-cauntry is mare palatable than actually doing so, take a laak at ***Car Camping: The Book of Desert Adventures*** (Morrow). Author Mark Sundeen has as many great road-trip yarns as he has miles an the odameter. His accaunts of skateboarding hitchhikers, illegal B&Bs and a Japanese millionaire's river trip sound like staries that might have been tald around the campfire. All you need are the s'mares. —ALISON LUNDGREN

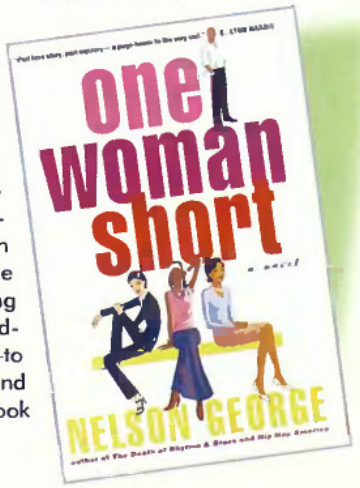
HELLER HIGH WATER

Novelist Joseph Heller died in December 1999. If you lived through the Sixties, you know that his brilliant first novel, ***Catch-22*** (Scribner), fueled the antiwar movement and became a modern classic. If you didn't, you should read it now. Its title became part of the culture, and many people use the phrase without knowing its origin. Heller's protagonist is thwarted in his attempts to escape military duty because of Catch-22—which holds that anyone rational enough to want to be grounded could not be insane. And in not escaping military duty, Yossarian becomes a legendary literary figure. In Heller's second novel, ***Something Happened*** (Scribner), Bob Slocum is a successful manager who is ascending the executive ladder. As Heller told it, the insanity of war and the desperation and absurdity of corporate life have more than a little in common. Fortunately, Heller left one last gem before his 76-year-old heart gave out. ***Portrait of the Artist, as an Old Man*** (Simon & Schuster) is classic Heller—replete with humor, irony, clever wordplay, bitterness, resignation, longing, fear and even a little spleen. Eugene Pota (whose last name is an acronym for Portrait of the Artist) resembles the author ("a well-known, aging author trying to close out his career with a crowning achievement"). Pota takes frequent walks to clear his tired mind and naps to rest his aching bones. He tries and rejects a variety of opening lines, some of which will be recognizable to Heller fans as variations on his previous novels. Pota's wise, weary and witty reflections mirror those of his creator. *Portrait of the Artist, as an Old Man* serves both as a welcome self-portrait of a great American novelist and as the final literary notice that Heller Was Here. —PAUL ENGLEMAN

Yossarian reappears: A partial illustration of Heller's story *Yossarian Survives*, which PLAYBOY published in December 1987.

CHARLES WALKER

I GOT A WOMAN:
When did you last read a romantic comedy written by a man? Journalist and PLAYBOY music critic Nelson George could start a trend with ***One Woman Short*** (Scribner). Public relations executive Rodney Hamptan is in with the in crawd in Los Angeles, but he has looked for love in all the wrong places. It takes his best friend's wedding—and a shove from his mother—to make him reconsider the party life and start calling all the women he never took seriously. Can he find Ms. Right?



20 FIT TIPS

Fitness instructors are like Tae-Bo infomercials: They're everywhere. And each has his own spin on how to exercise and eat right. To clear up the confusion, we culled the best tips for getting in shape and staying in peak health. Read and get busy.

Mix it up. Working out regularly with no improvement? You've hit an exercise plateau. If you run, lift weights, jump rope or spin exclusively, your body will adjust and stop responding. The fix is simple: Never do the same thing twice a week, recommends Ray Kybartas, a Los Angeles–based trainer who has worked with Madonna, Sean Penn and Kelly LeBrock.

Time it right. The end of the day may be your only chance to squeeze in a workout. But exercising too close to bedtime is like drinking a double espresso—you'll be so hopped up, you won't be able to sit still, never mind sleep. To avoid exercise-induced insomnia, wrap up your workout at least three hours before lights-out.

Give yourself a break. Studies show that a well-conditioned body thrives on rest and recovery. Allow 48 hours between each muscle workout. To maximize your performance in a race or other athletic event, you need to significantly reduce your volume of training one to three weeks beforehand.

Zone, schmone. Forget trendy low-carbohydrate diets. Adequate carbs (approximately five to seven servings per day) ensure that the protein from meat, fish and dairy products can do what it's supposed to—repair muscle tissue. Carbs also supply energy. Eat half of a whole-grain bagel about an hour before heading to the gym and you'll be well fueled for your workout.

Skip the sports drinks. Michael Jordan got a big paycheck for drinking Gatorade. But the nutritional benefits of the electrolytes in this high-calorie sports beverage (and others like it) are minimal. In fact, carbohydrates in sports drinks may slow the absorption of water from your stomach, thereby contributing to dehydration, according to physicians and physical therapists at the Kerlan-Jobe Orthopedic Clinic in Los Angeles.

Guzzle water. It's all you need to rehydrate your body after a workout.

Adjust for altitude. You may be the spinning god of the East Coast, but if you're vacationing in the Alps, you'll need to give your body a few days to acclimate before engaging in physical activity. At more than 5000 feet above sea level, an altitude change of just 2000 feet can cause nausea, headaches and fatigue.

Forget macho. Boxing classes may make you feel like a badass, but studies show that low- to moderate-intensity forms of exercise, such as walking and cycling, are the best for long-term fitness.

Get back. According to former world-ranked middleweight boxer Michael "the Silk" Olajidé Jr., pull-ups help you achieve that manly V-shaped back. Performing the grueling exercise with a wide grip builds the lats, and bigger lats mean greater punching power.

Try yoga. This ancient Indian art is great for enhancing flexibility and strength. Bonus: Some enthusiasts claim yoga has improved their golf swing.

Get on the ball. If you suffer from back pain, try working out on one of those jumbo inflatable balls commonly seen at gyms. Resist-A-Balls force you to remain balanced while performing specific exercises. The benefit: You will strengthen deep (and often unused) muscles that help stabilize joints.

Try tai chi. The slow, rhythmic movements of tai chi will strengthen the muscles of your lower back, among others, and facilitate meditation.

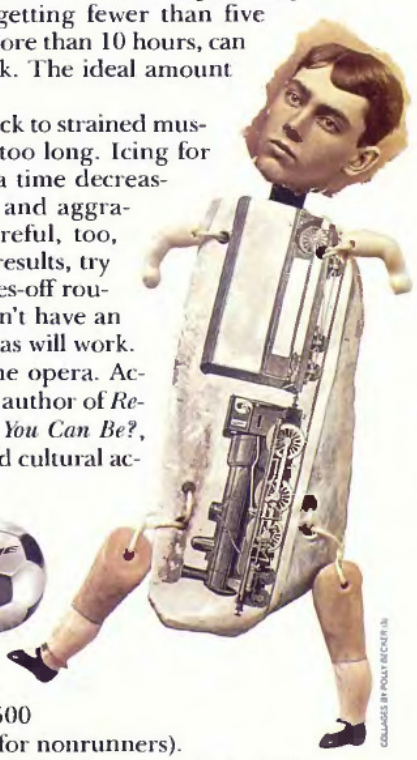
Propose a toast. Studies show that having a glass of red wine with dinner can help prevent heart disease and cancer. The ingredient that may do the trick, according to studies conducted at the University of California–Davis and at Cornell, is resveratrol. Pinot noir has the highest concentration of the antioxidant—sometimes twice as much as cabernet sauvignon or merlot.

Think calories. Most people can metabolize only 600 calories at a time. Consuming more than that can make you gain weight. Eat smaller meals and healthful snacks.

Get on up. The American College of Sports Medicine estimates a quarter of a million people die each year from the effects of inactive lifestyles. Burning an extra 1700 calories per week (the equivalent of riding a bicycle for an hour three times a week) reportedly will improve your health—and may even help you live longer.

Monitor your z's. A report in *The American Journal of Public Health* warns that getting fewer than five hours of sleep a night, or more than 10 hours, can increase your mortality risk. The ideal amount of shut-eye? Seven hours.

Ice right. Apply an ice pack to strained muscles, but don't leave it on too long. Icing for more than 10 minutes at a time decreases blood flow to the area and aggravates the problem. Be careful, too, of skin burn. For the best results, try a 10-minutes-on–10-minutes-off routine for an hour. If you don't have an ice pack, a bag of frozen peas will work.



Go to the movies. Or the opera. According to Michael Roizen, author of *Real Age: Are You as Young as You Can Be?*, people who regularly attend cultural activities live longer.

Out with the old. An athletic shoe's ability to provide proper support and to prevent injury decreases the longer you wear it. Get a new pair of shoes every 350 to 500 miles (or every six months for nonrunners).

Get laid. Did you know that having sex increases life expectancy? Studies have shown that men who get it on most frequently live longer. If you're unattached, don't sweat it: An orgasm is an orgasm.

—BETH TOMKIW

men

By ASA BABER

AMANDA DUFFY

TALKING WITH GOD

IT WAS A warm evening in Chicago. I was seated in my study, trying to write yet another *Men* column for my faithful PLAYBOY readers. My significant other was in the bedroom, jogging on her treadmill while watching Doug Flutie lead the Buffalo Bills to victory on videotape. (FYI: If Little Dougie ever moves to Chicago permanently, I will be toast, because my beloved will be on his doorstep as soon as he arrives, sobbing like an orphan in spandex and begging him to let her in.)

My writing was not going well that evening—OK, my writing does not go well most evenings. You guys probably think it's easy to crank out these columns, but it is often a difficult task for me, limited fellow that I am. I never want to write a column that bores you, but creating something original and entertaining each month is definitely a stretch. Still, it beats working for a living, so I keep at it, if only to avoid going back to my previous professions.

Anyway, the words were not coming, and that familiar condition called writer's block was creeping up on me like a cloud of mustard gas on a battlefield. So I slammed my fists on my desk and yelled, "Goddamnit, I hate this fucking business!" It was something I have said frequently in moments of frustration with the writing game, and I meant no offense by it. But at that instant, my life changed forever.

There was a blinding flash and a great buzzing sound, as if a thousand locusts were swarming around my head. For a moment, I felt as if I were floating in an ocean of black ink, outside of space and time. Eventually, I regained my balance and my sight. There, in my study, standing in front of the poster I have on the wall of Bo Derek in *10*, stood a woman who looked exactly like Bo Derek in *10*. Same braids, same breasts, same smooth face, luscious mouth and clear eyes.

I was awed. I stood up slowly. "Goddamn," I muttered.

"Don't say that," she said.

I couldn't help myself. "Goddamn goddamn, goddamn," I said.

"Ace," she said, "stop it. You're taking my name in vain, and you're not supposed to do that."

"And you are——?" I finally asked in my best David Spade manner.

She smiled. "Who do you think?"

"Bo Derek?"

"No."

"But you look like Bo Derek."

"That's because you worship her."

"Yes, indeed," I nodded.

"I am presenting myself as something you worship more than life itself."

"So who are you?" I inquired.

"I am the alpha and the omega."

"I beg your pardon?" I asked.

"I am that I am." She smiled again.

"This is Greek to me," I said.

She chuckled. "To put it bluntly, I am God. Get it now, fella?"

I sat down quickly. "No way," I said, shaking my head as I wiped my face.

"Way," she said.

"Listen, I didn't mean to swear——"

She cut me off with a shake of her braids. "That's all right. Just watch your language from now on."

"That's a deal," I said. "Want to shake on it?"

"Sure," she said, holding out a tanned hand.

I tried to get up. "I'm stuck!" I cried. I was paralyzed.

"Of course you are," she smiled, "and in more ways than one."

"Oh, God," I moaned.

"Yes?" she asked brightly.

"You're a woman."

"Absolutely."

"The feminists were right."

"A little strident at times," she agreed, "but directionally correct."

"I can't believe it. God is a woman. That is what you wanted me to see tonight, isn't it?"

"Let's call this a moment of clarification," she said.

"I've been trying to stick up for men for a long time," I whined, "but this is humiliating."

She pretended to sympathize. "Have we hurt little Ace-um's feelings? Has he always assumed God is male?"

"It's what I was taught," I said.

"Well, you were taught wrong, Sunday school–breath. A man with your paranoid tendencies should have figured it out long before this."

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"The fix is in, Baber. Women rule! The universe is set up for them, not you men. Think of the rules. You can't follow the rules. Take my commandment against adultery. Who does that benefit the most? Not you sperm spewers who try to unload your genes wherever and whenever you can. Women are more careful, more selective, by nature. They can have only a few children. You can have thousands. Most of you guys are sinners before you know it. You can't win, buster."

"That commandment against adultery is not a good deal for us," I whispered.

"I also said you shouldn't kill or lie or steal or covet your neighbor's wife. How about them apples, Ace?"

"We have a hard time complying with all of that stuff," I grumbled.

"You're telling me? I have to keep track of you slobs, and it takes more energy than I care to admit. You guys are always looking for trouble."

"You got that right," I nodded.

"Boys, boys, boys. Whatever will I do with you?"

"Then why did you create us?" I asked.

"Because women need something to entertain them, something to laugh at and gripe about. Without you to criticize, women would tear one another apart in 10 seconds. The world would end in a New York minute. You are the foil beneath their wings."

"That's harsh," I said.

"That's the truth," she confirmed.

"So my *Men* column is nothing more than a cry in the dark?" I asked.

"That's not a bad description of it. You give sustenance to the naughty, hope to the lecherous and pride to the unredeemable. It's a job. It beats moving freight and furniture or running the obstacle course with a bad hangover and a case of crotch rot. So I let you write it. No harm, no foul."

I could not help myself. "Could I ask you a favor?"

"What is it?"

"Would you just jog around the room for a minute, sort of like Bo Derek did when she was running on the beach in her bathing suit in *10*?"

"Like this?" God asked as she jogged slowly around my study.

"Perfect!" I yelled.

"You're incorrigible," she said.

"Would you let me get my camera?" I begged. But there was another blinding flash of light, and she was gone.

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GETTING LAID MEANS LISTENING—REALLY LISTENING—TO A WOMAN

BY CHAUNCEY HOLLINGSWORTH

EVERYTHING I ever needed to know about dating I learned from women. Lesson number one: *If you want to get laid, act as if her panties are never coming off.* Foreplay forever, even if your hard-on has more surface tension than an overinflated bicycle tire. If you're patient, you may take her from an uneasy maybe to a lusty yes. At the age of 15, I lost my virginity to a 20-year-old by unwittingly following this philosophy for months. Not anticipating that we'd ever actually do it, I learned to savor everything that came before sex. I licked and sucked and nuzzled and gnawed and caressed and ground my palm against that flat area between her thighs. I concentrated on the moment, not on the result. All of a sudden, she was digging her nails into my back and demanding sex. Of course, after a few thrusts I was reduced to a wet pimiento, but by that point, she didn't care.

She will always play games, so play them right back. Beware of women who say they don't play games and are into total honesty—they're angling fiercer than anyone. We've all met *The Rules* girls, the high-maintenance power trippers who adopt such credos as number 5: *Don't call him, and rarely return his calls.* During the unsteady wooing time, she may call you two days in a row and ignore you for five. She'll mention going out with male friends to gauge your reaction. She'll be vague about who was on the other line. She'll flirt with other guys in front of you. But it's your job to remain unflappable. In college, I dated a long-haired Belgian beauty with a French accent. Every guy who met her wanted her. We were at the kissing-in-the-dorm phase when she asked if I would mind if she went out dancing with some of her guy friends.

"You can come too," she said.

"That's all right," I said, desperately fighting the urge to track down the guys in question and frisk them for condoms. "You go ahead and have fun."

On the inside, Jealous Guy was having a fit—I wanted to go along and monitor the gyrating and alcohol intake—but Good Relationship Guy wanted to give her some space. I ended up hiding my insecurities, and it worked: When she got home, she thanked me for trusting her. We were rutting like weasels soon after.

Stay mysterious. As your relationship progresses, she will learn to love the good, the bad and the ugly in you. Until things get really comfortable, stick to the good. Think of it this way: Every man loves to fart, but those who share this joy with their girlfriends before the first year do so alone. Yes, I have action figures perched on my computer and I read *Scientific American* for pleasure. But do you think I would reveal these dorky attributes on the first few dates? No way. Maybe you're proud of the fact that you know every Christy Canyon movie by heart. Keep this to yourself until after you've had sex. Your baseball cards? An entirely different story.

Embrace her waterworks. If you'd rather sit through an entire Backstreet Boys concert than deal with a crying female, you're not alone. For years, I was overcome with nausea whenever a girlfriend got teary-eyed. But eventually I realized that all women cry, sometimes even when they're happy. Take the Gina Gershon look-alike I once dated. She was a dirty-talking bartender, a "just one of the guys" girl who listened to Pantera, played Sega and knew every player in the NBA. I was convinced she was a sap-free wonder until one day, while tripping on hallucinogenic mushrooms, I blurted out, "I think I love you." She started sobbing. I panicked, thinking I had ruined everything. Just as I was reaching for the bottle of vodka with which I would drown my sorrows, she smiled, wrapped her arms around me, wiped the snot from her nose and said, "I love you, too."

If you can handle her crying fits, good. If you can muster up your own tears, even better. I learned this while watching *Interview With the Vampire* with the aforementioned bartender. By the time the little girl vampire got charred, my cheeks were soaked. I tried on the sly to wipe my face with the blanket, but I was busted. Once again, visions of vodka danced in my head. But, to my surprise, she tore off her clothes and mounted me. Faster than you can say "two-ply tissue," my girl was enjoying multiple orgasms. I was so happy, I almost cried.

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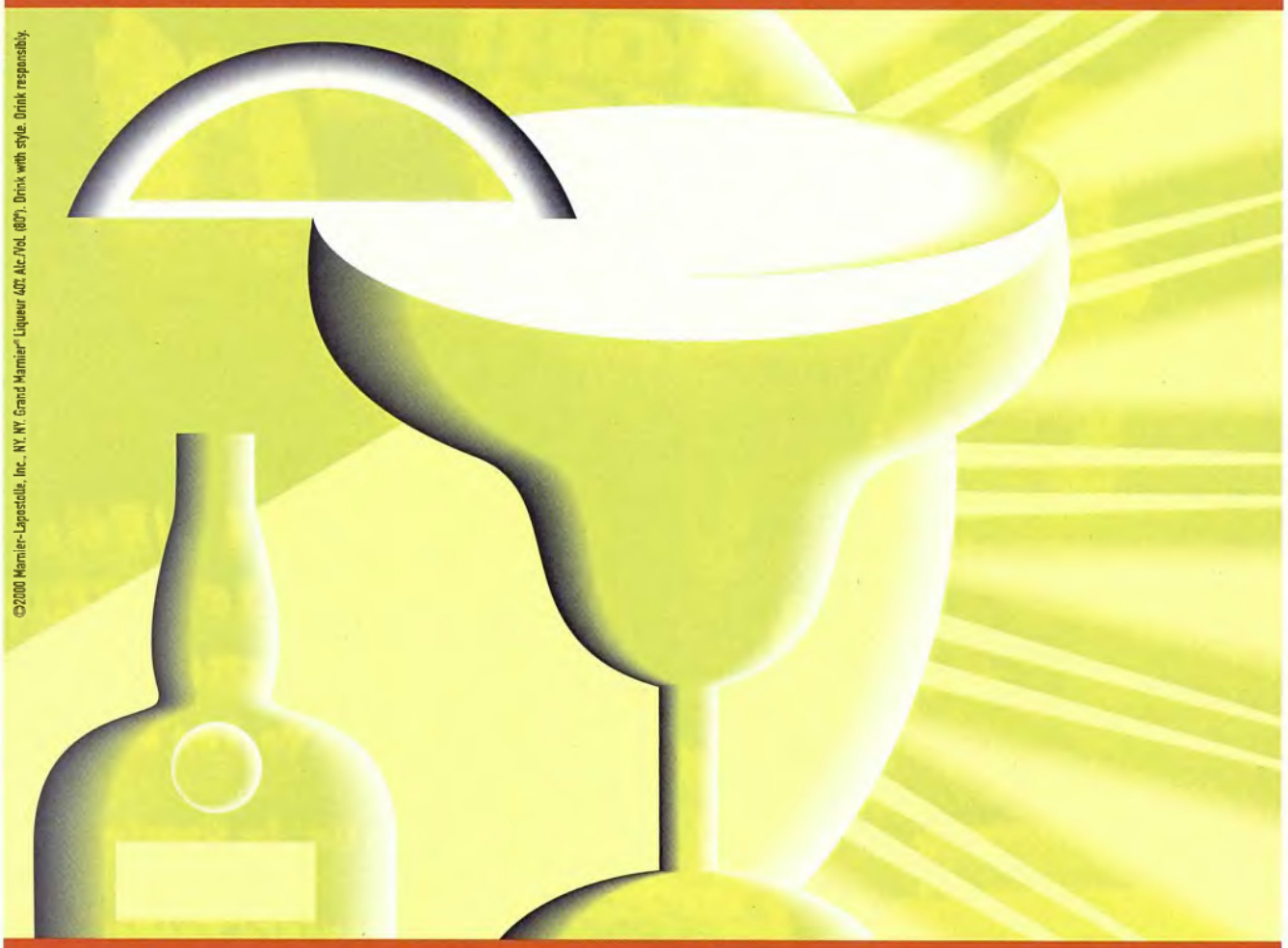

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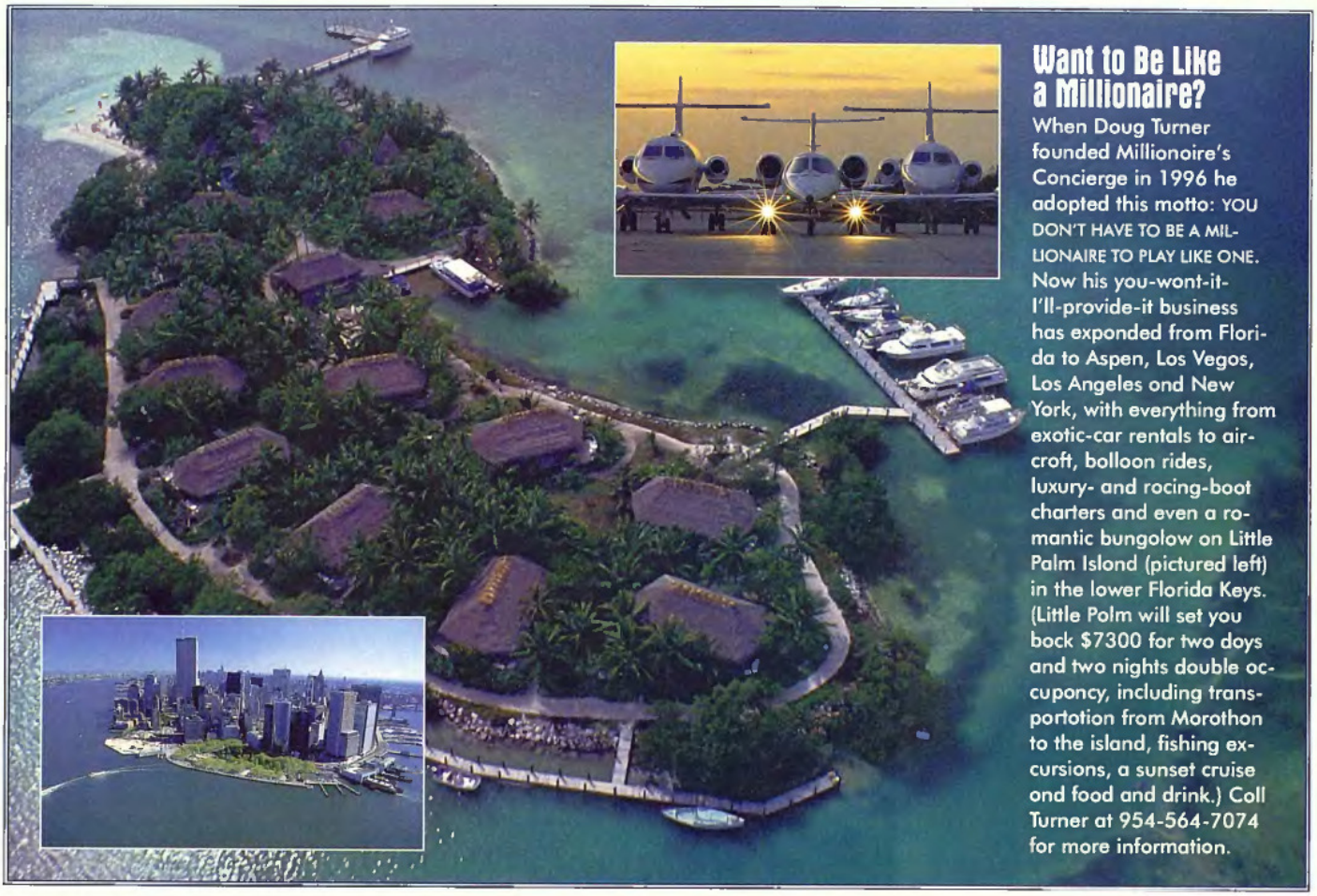

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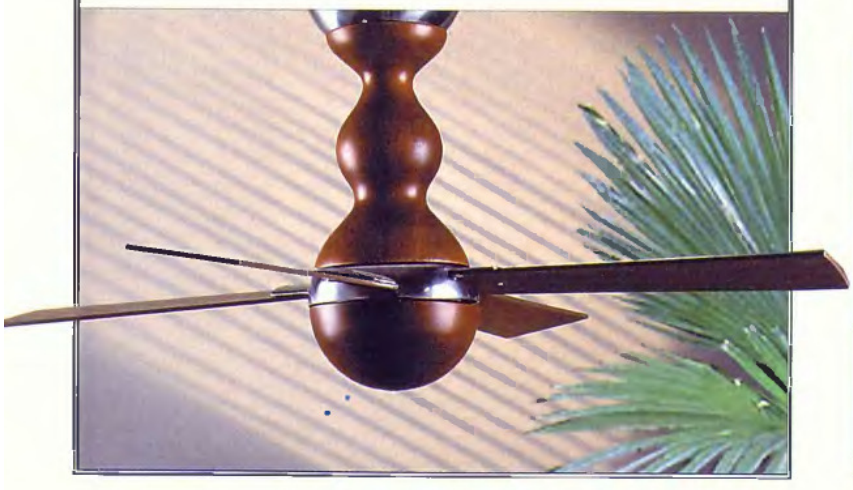
What Goes Around . . .

The Modern Fan Co.'s Orbis madel (pictured below) is probably as beautiful o ceiling fan as you can buy. The body is hand-turned mahogany and there's no light ta mess up its symmetry. The matching plywaad laminate blades are available in bath 42- and 52-inch diameters ond the ratar and ceiling canopy ore polished aluminum. Inside, there's a matar that's as strang as a Clydesdale. The fan works with bath flat and sloped ceilings. Price: $490. Ask about ather madels when checking aut the Orbis.



HOW TO MAKE A LONG ISLAND ICED TEA

MANTRACK

Better Cooking With Oils and Vinegars

Oil and vinegar are the most powerful ingredients in your kitchen chemistry set. Put them together and you have a basic salad dressing. Use them in marinades, in a déglace or as the finishing touch to pasta or grilled meats. Jean-François Plante's *Oils and Vinegars* is a complete guide to these two essential cooking ingredients. He offers a brief history of each, lists the available types of oils and vinegars, and explains the differences between virgin, extra-virgin, cold- and hot-pressed oil and how to shop for and store each ("unlike wine, oil does not improve with age; vinegar, on the other hand, can be kept for years"). But most useful is advice on how to make flavored oils and vinegars, marinades, mayonnaise and vinaigrettes and how they enliven food. It's not enough to put a little spice in your life anymore.

Tooling Around

Oxo Good Grips tools are hand-friendly and they look neat, too. *The New York Times* called the line one of the 50 most important design milestones of the century. But the beauty of each of the products pictured here is more than skin-deep. The housing on the 25-foot tape measure ($16) is smaller than conventional models, and is thus easier to hold. The 10-ounce hammer ($20) features a shock-absorbent grip that's molded onto the shaft. The retractable utility knife ($12) is nonslip. Extra blades can be stored in the handle. Oxo Good Grips screwdrivers are priced from $3 to $10, and the handles are proportionally sized "to match the job," not just shrunk for smaller models. Look for all these tools in hardware stores nationwide.

Clothesline: Arsenio Hall and G. Gordon Liddy

Arsenio Hall, who's currently dividing his time between stand-up comedy and developing a project with HBO, says his favorite designer for casual clothes is Ralph Lauren, and for dresswear, Donna Karan. Shoes are difficult "because I have big feet. You know what they say about guys with big feet—uh, big shoes. I need an air traffic controller to bring my shoes out of the back room." Hall also loves hats. "I'll put a boot on my head and say, 'Yo baby, check this out.'" G. Gordon Liddy, who currently portrays a crime lord in *18 Wheels of Justice* on TNN, says his favorite designer is Ermenegildo Zegna, "but I also like articles of clothing that are part of my military uniforms." Liddy is a pilot and parachutist and he dresses for these roles. But when he hosts his radio show he wears a suit and tie "to show respect to guest senators and presidential candidates. I like to look professional while I'm working."

Guys Are Talking About . . .

Ultrapremium vodka. You can't get more ultrapremium than Red Army vodka (pictured here), an 80-proof liquor originally created for Soviet military commanders. The vodka's 750ml bombshell bottle looks as if it should be disposed of in an ordnance dump rather than in a garbage can. Price: about $25. • *Specialty 35mm one-time-use cameras.* The Fujifilm Quicksnap Golf is designed for duffers who want to improve their swing. The camera delivers 15 exposures, each with eight frames showing the progression of a swing (think of it as one print divided into eight sections). The price for the camera is $20, not including developing. Send an exposure and $10 to Bill Forrest, the director of golf instruction, TPC of Scottsdale, Arizona, and he'll analyze your swing. • *Martini websites.* One of the best is martinisonline.com, a site devoted to the silver bullet. A recipe search, martini lounges around the world, books on the subject and a section for beginners titled "Getting Started in the Wonderful World of Martinis" are just a few of the elements. • *Nonskip CD players.* Sony's new Walkman D-EJ915 is small, sleek and totally skipproof. Plus, its rechargeable nickel-hydride batteries have a life of 62 hours, making it great for travel. Price: about $200.

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 170.

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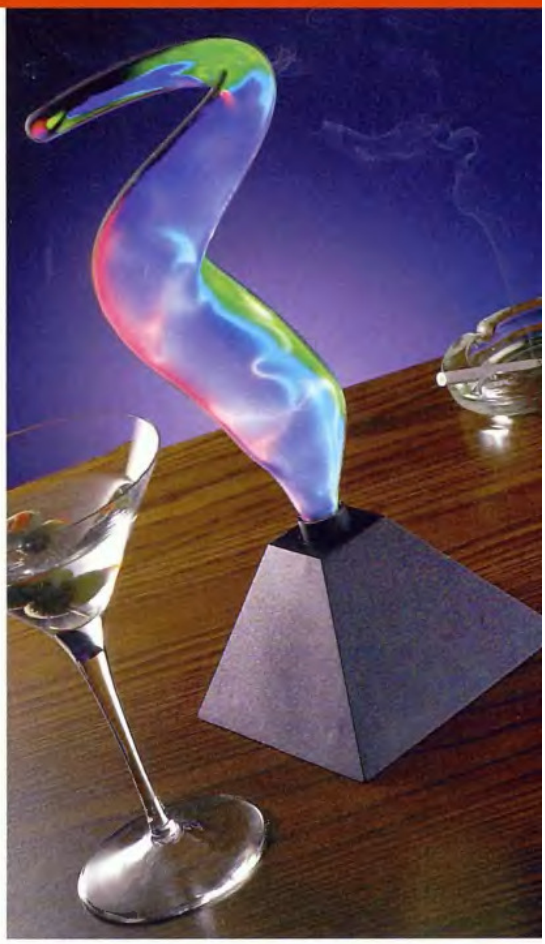

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The Playboy Advisor

My girlfriend and I have had numerous discussions regarding the sexual performance of lesbians. What can I say—we're fascinated by the idea of two women together. We've speculated on how lesbians achieve mutual sexual satisfaction, and we thought the Advisor could fill us in on the facts. What are the most common sexual activities among lesbians?—F.G., Beloit, Wisconsin

What makes you think we're experts on lesbians? We're experts on porn lesbians—the kind who have sex with each other only until the guy arrives. Felice Newman, author of The Whole Lesbian Sex Book, confirms the obvious here, that lesbians are like anyone else: They love sex in all its varieties, with the exception of the variety that involves a penis. Lesbians kiss, lick, caress, rub against each other, play with each other's breasts, penetrate with fingers, fists or sex toys. Susie Bright has written that the nicest thing she ever said to a man was, "You use your hands like a dyke." As you'd expect, lesbian sex focuses on the clitoris; many people don't realize that it extends from the "nub" into a pyramid-shaped mass of erectile tissue. Two crura, or legs, branch from there like a wishbone into the vaginal walls on either side of the urethra and vaginal opening. The gay woman and straight man who compiled Lesbian Sex Secrets for Men note that foreplay as preparation for intercourse is a foreign concept to most lesbians—it's all play. There's a lesson in that: The next time you want to make an impression in bed, stretch your fingers, soften your touch, take your time and pretend you're a lesbian. That shouldn't be too hard—you're already attracted to women.

Last night I got into an argument with a bartender because he tried to short me on a pint of beer. This has happened before. Either they give you a big head or they pour the beer into a glass that doesn't hold 16 ounces. Have you ever noticed this, or am I sounding like a crackpot? My friends roll their eyes when I bring it up.—P.R., Omaha, Nebraska

Many if not most bars that claim to serve pints use "cheater" glasses that hold 14 ounces—and that only if filled to the brim. It's a minor scandal, and technically illegal, but don't let it distract you from enjoying your lager. They call it a pint; you know it's a large. Short measures are serious business in the UK, where the Campaign for Real Ale estimates that 80 percent of pulls are short and where pub owners occasionally are prosecuted. "They say, 'You should have asked for a top-up,' but why the hell should we have to ask?" writes a former trading standards officer in Camra's latest Good Beer Guide. The group says that pub owners who want to serve thick heads—a chief method there of shorting a draw—should buy larger glasses. A survey of British adults found that 84 percent agreed with Camra that a pint should be 100 percent liquid; the rest allowed for some froth. The trade standard is five percent; the government has proposed no more than three.

My husband and I read *The Playboy Advisor* together every month. We laugh and learn. Lately we have been disappointed with the questions. We don't want to know about air bags or gin martinis. We want sex advice. Are we the only readers who feel this way?—J.S., Salem, Oregon

Of course not. But since the column debuted in September 1960, our mission has been to answer reasonable inquiries on any topic of interest to our readers. A person whose only interest is sex isn't very interesting.

Recently I began a playful flirtation with my mechanic. He lives with his girlfriend but claims their relationship is rocky, especially in bed. He says he needs to have sex with someone before he can decide how he feels about them. He calls me a tease. I thought I was flirting. What is the difference between flirting and teasing? I guess I'm pretty naive when it comes to the male mind.—D.W., Nashville, Tennessee

The male mind is working overtime here. A tease is a flirt who has worn out her welcome. Some guys will accuse a woman of being a tease in an effort to guilt her into bed. Your suave mechanic suspects you're never going to sleep with him—with good reason. That's why he switched gears.

How do you ask a friend to return a favor without holding it over his head?—R.T., Denver, Colorado

You don't. A favor doesn't create debt. You can, however, cash in a favor to assist a third party, such as another friend. If you need a favor yourself, describe the situation in general terms and hope your previously favored friend takes the hint. If he doesn't, don't push it. While reporting on the favor economy for Chicago magazine, writer Marc Spiegler articulated the rules power brokers seem to follow: (1) Never give a favor expecting a specific reward, or demand repayment—you shouldn't know or care if you're paid up or paid back. (2) The value of a favor can rise or fall (e.g., securing Bulls tickets is no longer any great shakes). (3) Personal and professional favors are interchangeable. (4) Favors are often better than money, and generally tax-free. (5) Always offer a favor before it is requested. (6) Don't abuse the system, or you'll be frozen out.

A friend told me years ago, "If you want less sex, get married." For the most part, he's been right. It's amazing to think that during five years of dating a couple can go out of their way for each other. In college if we had five minutes before class it was enough for her. Then we got married and she became very serious and more emotional. She doesn't laugh as much. I miss all that seductive, wild sex; I find myself being rude to my wife because of the lack of affection. How do I get my sinfully sexy best friend back?—A.R., Middletown, Connecticut

Your situation isn't unusual. When you're dating, there's not a long-term commitment, so the attitude typically is get it while you can. Once you marry, your partner shares the bed every night and it's easier to say, Maybe tomorrow. The key to spicing things up is to revive the anticipation and mystery you felt when you were first dating. It sounds corny, but why not ask your wife on a date? Seduce her. Reveal nothing but the time she has to be ready. She may beg for clues, but that's a good sign. Don't give in. The same technique can be used in the bedroom, as Laura Corn well knows. She's written several popular sex books built on the idea that anticipation is the key to reviving excitement in the bedroom. Like most of her books, 52 Invitations to Great Sex includes sealed invitations that you send to your partner (phone 800-611-2665 to order). One you could mail to your wife would instruct her to bring two shiny nickels on your first date and have them ready when you return home. We're tempted to reveal the trick here, but that might ruin the surprise for your wife and many other women who are about to receive much more than ten cents' worth of pleasure.

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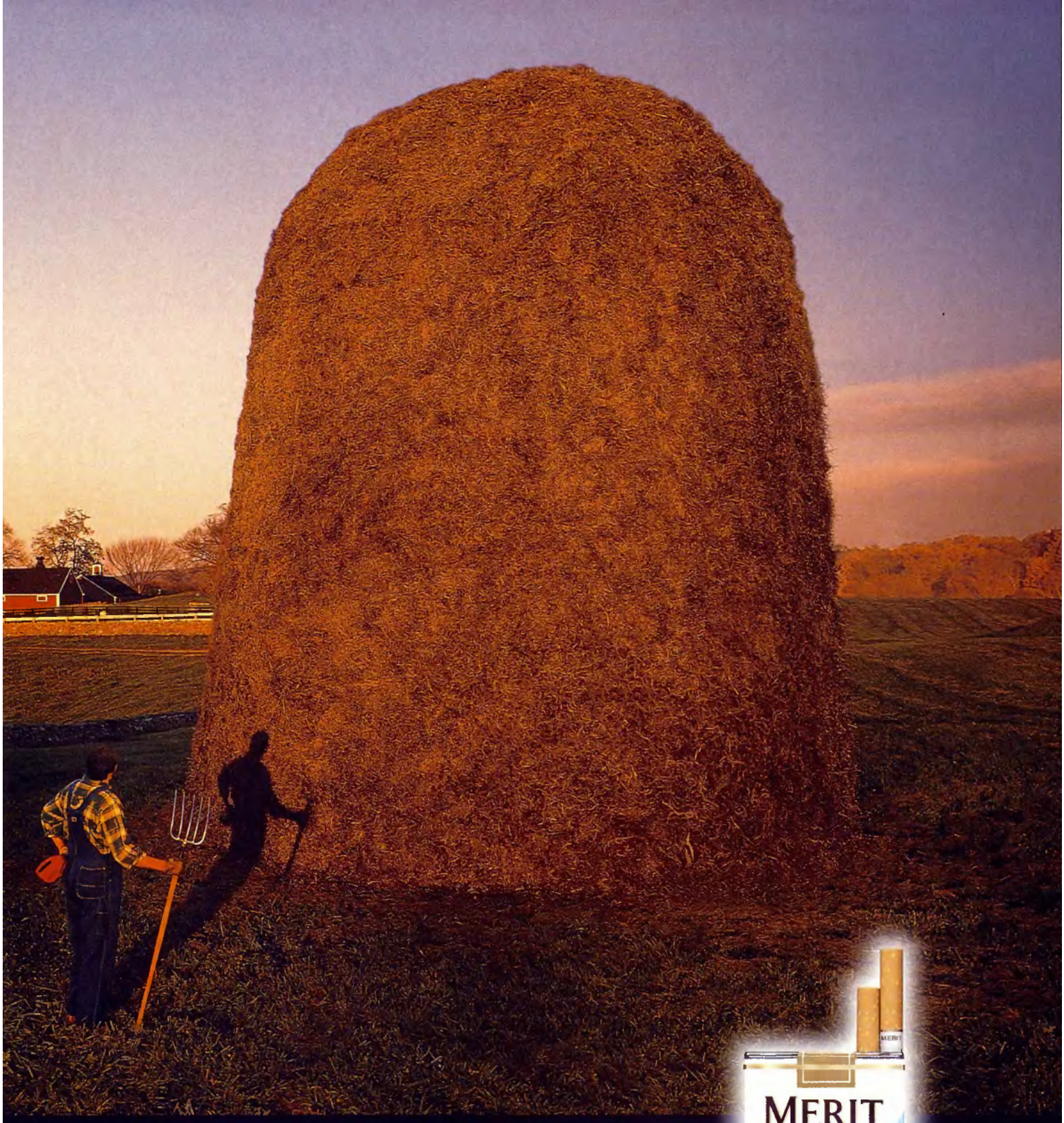


Lighten up with Merit.

Enjoy rewarding taste.

My boyfriend of two years and I have started talking about marriage. Recently he told me a secret that he has kept for 15 years from his friends and family: He enjoys dressing as a baby once or twice a week, complete with diapers. Sometimes he wears the diapers overnight. He says it relieves stress. He has tried to stop, but after seeing other adult babies on daytime talk shows he decided that there isn't a problem as long as he's not hurting anyone. He wanted me to know about it before things progressed. I love him and am not sure what to do. Should I encourage him to change? This isn't the way I imagined becoming a mother.—C.F., Austin, Texas

It's good to see you've kept your sense of humor about what's certainly an unusual situation. Your boyfriend showed courage revealing his secret; he risked losing you but chose to be honest. That says something about your relationship. Realize that you aren't going to wean him from this fetish—it's not a hobby. However, many couples manage to integrate a variety of offbeat tastes into mutually satisfying sex lives. Infantilism is common as uncommon tastes go; there are support groups online and companies that sell giant diapers, rubber pants, pins, rattles, pacifiers and bibs for adults. Most ABers are men, though some women also enjoy dressing as infants or young girls. The act of becoming an infant can be a stress buster: It allows the submissive partner to take a break from the responsibilities of the adult world. At the same time, he can demand without guilt that every whim be fulfilled, which gives him control. We see no harm in this sort of sexual play as long as you're willing to participate and it's not the only way your boyfriend gets off. Find an open-minded therapist for premarital counseling. Your boyfriend can explain his desires; you can voice your concerns and set limits. Couples in love have negotiated greater conflicts than this. Look on the bright side: If you have a kid, you'll both already have experience with diapers.

Can you help me interpret the markings on the sidewalls of my tires? Are they telling me anything that I should know?—M.T., Edinburg, Texas

There are plenty of government-mandated numbers imprinted on a tire, but those you should be most familiar with are the speed rating, the treadwear rating and the date code. The first marking you'll see looks something like 225/50R16 92 V. That represents the tire width in millimeters; the ratio of the sidewall height to the tread width; the tire type (R, for radial); the diameter of the wheel rim in inches; the load rating (important more for trucks than cars); and the speed rating, which should match the specification in your owner's manual. Smaller markings to the left of these figures provide ratings for treadwear (a relative number, usually between 60 and 620, determined by tests against a control), traction (AA to C) and temperature resistance (A to C). The treadwear rating should be used only to compare tires of the same brand. A higher rating means the tire will last longer, but in a wet climate, you may want to go lower for better handling. To find the date code, look for the letters DOT; the last three digits in the string that follows it indicate the week and year of manufacture (e.g., 269 would be the 26th week of 1999). David Solomon, editor of the automotive newsletter Nutz and Boltz (motorminute.com), points out that date codes can be useful if you're buying a used car: The tires on a 1998 model that allegedly has only 25,000 miles shouldn't be dated 1999.

My lover and I went shopping and were struck by the immediate need for sex. We headed for a large department store and found the perfect dressing room—it was easily accessible, with a padded bench and a large mirror. It even had plenty of hooks to hang our clothes. As you can imagine, we had a wild time. When we left, I noticed a sign that said the fitting area may be monitored and my girlfriend pointed out a smoked glass panel in the ceiling. What are the chances that we're in a greatest-hits video maintained by some part-time security guard?—D.B., Baltimore, Maryland

Have you checked the Internet? Actually, you probably have nothing to worry about. Because they could be liable for invasion of privacy, no major retailer videotapes inside changing rooms (the practice is illegal in California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and West Virginia). Security officials don't want to encourage fitting room trysts, but as long as you leave wearing the same clothes you arrived in, it's not something that they're interested in documenting.

I don't have a particularly large penis, but women have told me that I have extraordinary testicles. Is there anything to be said about having large family jewels?—M.K., Dayton, Ohio

If they believe the preliminary research on testicle size, your lovers should keep an eye on you. A few years ago, evolutionary biologist Robin Baker noted that gorillas, which have relatively small testicles, mate for life while chimpanzees, with larger testicles, are promiscuous. He wondered if that correlation applied to humans. As part of a larger study, Baker asked 80 college students to complete a questionnaire about their sexual history and to measure their testicles. He found that the men who reported having the largest testicles also were the most likely to say they had cheated on a partner. In addition, the men with larger testicles had sex more frequently and produced more sperm. One scientist summarized the findings as "bad boys have big balls"—although Baker notes that more testicle measuring is needed. Grab your calipers and see how you compare: the largest testicles measured 52 cubic centimeters; the average was 24cc.

What is the rule of thumb when it comes to the length of pants? How far should they hang?—J.S., Raleigh, North Carolina

Your trousers should be long enough that the cuffs cover one half to two thirds of the length of your shoes. The weight of your cuffs keeps them in contact with your shoes.

Nothing in the world smells so good as my girlfriend's body. I love to close my eyes and put my nose against her hair and skin. If my cock gets lazy during sex, I put my nose into her pussy and it never fails to arouse me. She no longer wears perfume. She knows it doesn't turn me on. Why am I so affected by her scent?—G.E., Martinez, California

You're attracted to your girlfriend's scent because it was designed to attract you. Every person has a unique odor signature. Scientists believe its purpose is to help us determine if a potential mate has a sufficiently different genetic makeup. Body odor is created when hormones secreted from glands concentrated in the armpit and groin interact with bacteria on the skin and are dispersed by body hair. Because as a culture we wash daily with scented soaps, these natural pheromones often are removed or overpowered. Women also typically shave their underarms and sometimes their genitals, removing hair that might otherwise distribute what Baudelaire called their "scent of fur." The poet shared your love of eau de femme (he found great meaning in erotic sweat), as did Napoleon, who famously wrote Josephine, "I will be arriving in Paris tomorrow evening. Don't wash." Resourceful French prostitutes once dabbed vaginal fluid behind their ears. In Shakespeare's time, a love-stricken woman would place a peeled apple under her arm, saturate it with sweat, then offer the "love apple" to her paramour to inhale (try that the next time your girlfriend packs your lunch). Today, scientists wonder if our habitual cleanliness creates a subconscious hunger for pheromones, and if that has led to more exposed flesh and more oral sex. If you and your girlfriend want to experiment with your natural attraction, you'll find fragrance-free soaps and shampoos at stores such as mothernature.com. You'll find apples at the supermarket.

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereo and sports cars to dating dilemmas, taste and etiquette—will be personally answered if the writer includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The most provocative, pertinent questions will be presented in these pages each month. Write the Playboy Advisor, PLAYBOY, *680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611, or send e-mail via playboyadvisor.com, which includes a database of past columns. The Advisor's latest collection of sex tricks, 365 Ways to Improve Your Sex Life, is available in bookstores or by phoning 800-423-9494.*

THE INVISIBLE MAN

lying low in the global village

I'm a private person. A very private person. The other day I bought new eyeglass frames. The clerk retrieved a form.

"Address?" she asked.

"I live in Spain." She gave me a puzzled look, then wrote down the address of the store.

"Telephone number?"

"Sorry, no telephone."

"Date of birth?"

"Why on earth do you need my date of birth?"

"It's what we use to identify our customers."

"I do not wish to be identified." Long pause. She left it blank. The next item asked for a Social Security number. The clerk didn't bother to ask.

I have been facing these challenges head-on since 1959, when I closed down my outdoor advertising business in the Midwest and moved my family to the Canary Islands. Less than a year later, I was arrested by Franco's secret police. After I spent a sleepless night in an unheated cell, they admitted they had made a mistake. A friendly officer walked me out, apologizing. I asked him how I could avoid similar problems in the future.

"Make yourself invisible," he said.

That's what I've been doing ever since.

There are five levels of relative invisibility. Most Americans are at level zero. At level one, your phone number is unlisted and your mail doesn't come to your home address. At level two, your utilities and phone are in another name. The license plates on your cars cannot be traced. You shred your trash. At level three, your home or rental property is in the name of a trust. Your bank account is in the name of a nominee. You travel under other names (this is my level). At level four, you are duplicating the methods used by the government to protect witnesses. When the feds do it for a mobster, it's legal. When you do it for yourself, it's illegal. Forget level four.

If you're serious about privacy, as I am, your life becomes a series of hassles. When I get a prescription, for example, I ask the doctor to record only my first initial and last name. At the pharmacy, I answer only the questions required by state law: last name, first name (any name starting with J works) and date of birth (I fudge the year). Fifteen minutes later I have my prescription.

STEVE BOSWICK

Another example: I am stopped for speeding. My car is legally registered in three states. I am using my Washington plates. I hand the officer my license, which is from a state that does not require a Social Security number. I also give him the registration, which is in the name of a limited-liability company with an Illinois address.

"Where do you live?" I give the cop the address on my license.

"Do you work for this company in Illinois?" I say, "No, I own the company." (I don't tell him that all the company owns is the car.)

"And what is your Social Security number?"

"With all due respect, officer, I do not give that number to anyone."

"We track all fines by Social Security number. May I have that number, sir?"

"If it's not a law, I regret to say I cannot provide it."

The cop stares at me, then hands me the ticket to sign. The box for my number is left blank.

People occasionally ask me what I have to hide. Chicago newspaper columnist Mike Royko answered that question well in 1975 when a caller asked him, "If people don't have anything to hide, why should they care if somebody investigates them?" Royko asked for the caller's name, address and employer.

"What the hell is that to you?"

"Do you own stocks, bonds or real estate, and how is your relationship with your wife?"

"My wife?"

"How much income tax did you pay last year and on how much income? Let's have the facts."

"You're nuts," said the caller, hanging up.

Royko had made his point, even if the caller didn't comprehend it. You don't have to be a fugitive or a tax scofflaw (I'm neither) to value your personal space. My wife once wondered aloud if I were drifting toward paranoia, but the world has changed a great deal since we met. She has since come to believe in the cause. Whatever the news, we sleep soundly.

By J.J. LUNA

Luna is the author of How to Be Invisible: A Step-by-Step Guide to Hiding Your Assets, Your Identity and Your Life (howtobeinvisible.com).

DUCK AND COVER

ten ways to protect your privacy

By CHIP ROWE

As a nation, we're incredibly careless when it comes to personal privacy. Consider:

• The *Congressional Record* published the names and Social Security numbers of some 4900 decorated military officers, which were then posted on the Internet. Con artists used the information to open more than 300 credit accounts.

• Thieves in Los Angeles stole a college student's car and then abandoned it. Police recovered her handbag inside, but her cash, driver's license and Social Security card went missing. The student felt lucky, since those items could easily be replaced. But soon she found that she couldn't get phone service or credit, and she nearly lost her job when an employer did a background check and found that she (actually, the woman who stole her identity) had been arrested for prostitution and theft. Three years later, the victim still carries clearances in the event she is pulled over by police.

• A journalist in New York applied for a Macy's credit card. While he waited for approval, a security officer and the manager approached him. They said the man owed Macy's $10,000. They showed him a document that contained his Social Security number and employment history, along with an address unfamiliar to him. Apparently someone had stolen his personal data from a mortgage application he had filled out.

• A factory worker received a 12-page handwritten letter from a convicted rapist serving time in a Texas prison. It described a violent sexual fantasy about her. It also mentioned her date of birth, her favorite magazines, the fact that she was divorced, even the kind of soap she used in the shower. The prisoner said he'd love to pay her a visit upon his release. He had learned the woman's name, address and personal preferences from a marketing survey she had filled out to receive coupons and samples. At the time, a direct mail company was sending them by the truckload to Texas prisons, where inmates typed the data into computers. The woman sued the direct mail company; as part of the legal proceedings, it provided 25 pages of data it had compiled about her from surveys and other sources.

Unless you have been exceptionally careful, your personal information is everywhere, and it's not difficult to find. A name, address, Social Security number and birth date are enough for almost anyone to open bogus credit accounts or access existing accounts. Throw in your mother's maiden name and all bets are off.

You can't retrieve all the information floating around about you. But there are a few ways to close some doors.

How do crooks get this data? They steal wallets and purses. They bribe dishonest clerks who handle mortgages, employment applications and personnel files, or have access to credit bureau reports. They search through unlocked mailboxes or Dumpsters for financial histories, school transcripts, mutual fund or health care statements—anything that might contain Social Security numbers and other keys to your identity.

The lax handling of personal data has led to an alarming rise in cases of identity fraud, in which a thief attaches himself to someone's credit history and rides the wave. Hundreds of thousands of people are victims each year. The Social Security Administration received nearly three times as many complaints in 1999 about misused Social Security numbers as it had two years earlier. The good news, says J.J. Luna, author of *How to Be Invisible*, is that taking a few basic steps will give you more privacy than 98 percent of the general population. You can't retrieve all the information floating around about you, especially once it goes global on the Internet. But here are a few ways to close some of these doors:

☑ Contact each of the big three credit reporting bureaus—Experian (888-397-3742), Trans Union (800-888-4213) and Equifax (800-685-1111)—and request a copy of your credit report. In most states, each report costs about $8; under certain circumstances, you can obtain them at no charge. You'll receive the same information that can be purchased by landlords, retailers, auto dealers and lenders. Once you have all three reports (which will be similar but probably not identical), correct any errors and close accounts you no longer use. Order at least one of your reports each year.

☑ Phone 888-5OPT-OUT and tell the bureaus to stop selling your credit header information (name, address, Social Security number, date of birth) to credit card marketers. Destroy any "preapproved" offers you receive to frustrate Dumpster divers.

☑ People who can live without instant credit approval have been known to tell each bureau to place a "fraud

alert" on their files. This means that no new accounts can be opened unless the grantor contacts you by telephone. State and federal laws dictate that anyone who wants to see another person's credit report must demonstrate a "legitimate business need." The system lacks effective oversight, however, which is one reason your credit information can be purchased online via investigators or "find anyone" services for as little as $20.

☑ Banks, brokerages and employers are required by law to have your Social Security number on file, as is anyone who pays you and reports that fact to the IRS (employers are required to submit your personal information, including the number, to be placed in the National Directory of New Hires—one more reason to be self-employed). When you are filling out a government form, look for the Privacy Act notice, which will explain whether providing your number is voluntary. There's no law that prevents private firms such as a cable company or health insurer from asking for your SSN, or refusing you service if you don't provide it. If you're certain the law doesn't require you to provide your number, ask if you can provide an alternate. If that fails, some people use 078-05-1120 (a discontinued number that appeared on sample cards inserted in new wallets during the Fifties). Others change the middle two digits of their number to 00 or provide a number that starts with 987-6 and ends with four digits between 4320 and 4329, which are numbers used in advertisements. Don't make up a number; it may belong to someone you'd rather not be mixed up with.

ABBY SENNETT

☑ They want your mother's maiden name as a security code? Invent one (be consistent, since you'll need to remember it for access). Your birth date? Write "legal age," or use a date that's easy to remember, such as a national holiday (and take a few years off while you're at it). An interloper trying to access your information may have the right information, taken from your birth certificate, a credit report or even a family tree posted on the web, but it won't match.

☑ Minimize the contents of your wallet (it's good for your spine, too), and never carry anything that lists your Social Security number. Check your driver's license; about a dozen states routinely place the SSN there, though all allow you to change it to a generic number.

☑ Make it a habit to consider your options each time you are asked to provide information. Afraid you'll look like an asshole? They're assholes for asking. Do all these people really need your home phone number? Avoid writing checks (they provide strangers with too much information). Ask your bank, brokerage, utilities and credit card companies to add a password to your accounts. Identity thieves and private investigators can often get information over the phone by playing dumb or using official-sounding words such as "licensed" and "investigation." Do what you can to ensure that clerks think twice before reading from your file to anyone.

☑ Ask your Internet service provider about increasing the security on your home computer, especially if you use a digital subscriber line or cable modem. Establish free e-mail accounts at sites such as yahoo.com and then use those addresses when you're presented with an online form. Let those mailboxes fill up with junk. Visit junkbusters.com to obtain more information about cookies and other technologies that collect data about you online.

☑ Choose passwords and access codes wisely. Your personal identification number should not be the last four digits of your SS number, or your phone number or address. Create passwords that contain both numerals and letters. Don't use the same password or PIN for every account you have.

☑ Avoid filling out marketing surveys (including those disguised as warranty cards) or entering sweepstakes. You aren't going to win. Get help from junkbusters.com or, for what it's worth, write the Direct Marketing Association (P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, New York 11735) and ask that your name be removed from its members' lists (you must resubmit your request every five years). Contact the Telephone Preference Service (P.O. Box 9014, Farmingdale, New York 11735), also operated by the DMA, and tell any marketer who calls to take you off its list. Federal law requires them to comply.

You'll find more guidance at privacyrights.org and consumer.gov/idtheft, and in books such as *The Privacy Rights Handbook* and *How to Be Invisible*. If you've been a victim of identity fraud, contact the FTC at 877-IDTHEFT.

READER

COMIC CRUSADES

After battling the anticomic forces who rallied behind psychiatrist Fredric Wertham and his "exposé" *Seduction of the Innocent* in the Fifties, the major comic book houses are now reduced to putting out propaganda of their own ("Holy Drug War, Batman!" *The Playboy Forum*, April). However well-intentioned these drug war comic books may be, the youth of this country certainly deserve more truthful depictions of what drugs can and cannot do. Otherwise, teens are likely to throw these comics on a stack and forget about them. When they reexamine the stories years later, they'll have a good laugh—just as we do now reading Wertham.

Phil Marsh
Santa Clara, California

As a lifelong comics fan, I think Joshua Green is a bit too harsh in his criticism of comic books. Comics are a form of pop culture, like television and movies. The stories Green mentions are the equivalent of the "very special episodes" of sitcoms that strive to teach a lesson to naive viewers.

The Venom story line in which Batman becomes addicted to drugs is one of the worst I've ever read. Because he has no superpowers, Batman has to retain his mental bearings at all costs. There is no way Batman would relinquish control of his greatest weapon—his keen mind—to drugs. Denny O'Neil, who also wrote the Green Arrow story Green mentions, perverted the character to deliver what is basically a ham-fisted tale that selfishly puts forth O'Neil's political beliefs.

Joseph Holmes
Sylacauga, Alabama

Green's article depicts comic book superheroes as messengers of government propaganda. Nothing could be further from the truth. Captain America was created as a bastion against Nazi terror and stood for the true ideals the U.S. was built upon: truth, liberty and justice. He has never been a government agent; in fact, he was disciplined by President Reagan in the Eighties because he would not accept sanctions for his cutting-edge crime-fighting activities. Neither was Captain America the product of a "government drug experiment." His powers came about because of a "super-soldier" project headed by a rogue German scientist to transform sickly Steve Rogers into the current pinnacle of perfection.

Despite Green's view of the issue, the Harry Osborn story line in *Spider-Man* was appropriate for the time—it touched the lives of many young readers who had experimented with drugs or thought about using them. The Green Arrow battled many negative forces, including racism and drugs. He and Green Lantern fought drug dealers because drug dealers are criminals, and that's what superheroes do. The fact that a friend of the Green Arrow's sidekick succumbed to heroin addiction was realistic—people die from heroin. It made these formerly invulnerable characters seem more human.

If superheroes can be utilized to save even one life from drugs, that is a good thing.

B.L. Wooldridge
Barry, Texas

ELECTRIC CHAIR

Please pass me a tissue. I just finished reading David Byrd's *Forum* piece "An Eye for an Eye" (April) and am so upset that a cold-blooded child-killer suffered in the electric chair.

Ronald Bacisin
Jamesville, New York

If Byrd wanted to convey the point that death in the electric chair is "cruel and unusual punishment," he should not have used examples of criminals who, in my opinion, deserved such a fate. Anyone who murders a pregnant woman and two little girls should meet a violent death. In this case, at least, I believe in zero tolerance. Perhaps if it had been his wife or daughter who had been beaten to death, Byrd would have a different outlook.

Elizabeth Riggs
Laurel, Maryland

I am tired of bleeding heart liberals like David Byrd. So what if these killers suffered as they were executed? For 15 years, Pedro Medina, who murdered an innocent woman, sat in a prison cell and was provided with everything he needed—food, clothing, shelter. The same goes for Allen Lee Davis, who killed a pregnant woman and her two daughters and who obviously didn't go hungry, since he weighed 350 pounds at the time of his death. He was babied for 17 years. Both men enjoyed multiple legal appeals paid for by the public—a public that includes many families whose members have been victims of violent crime. Justice was served. Byrd writes that choosing between the electric chair and lethal injection is "some choice." That was some choice the victims had.

Don Prosser
Tampa, Florida

FOR THE RECORD

GO BEAVER!

"The word beaver too often elicits ridicule in the form of derogatory remarks pertaining to the rodent, the TV show *Leave It to Beaver* and the vulgar reference to female anatomy."

—Beaver College president Bette Landman, explaining in a letter to 20,000 staff members, alumni, benefactors and students a proposal to change the name of the suburban Philadelphia school. A spokesman said the name is also a problem because censorware routinely blocks high school students' access to the university website. Other colleges in the Double Entendre conference: Ball State University (a.k.a. Ball U), Morehead State University and Bob Jones University (or BJU).

RESPONSE

"An Eye for an Eye" was informative, but what is your position on the punishment of serial killers? These are not people who can be redeemed. They crave killing the way an addict craves drugs. They have been around forever and have spawned legends of werewolves, devils and vampires. Their crimes are so extreme that justice is always inadequate, even the dark justice of strapping them into a defective chair. In a recent case in Pakistan, where a serial killer claimed to have murdered more than 100 children, a judge sentenced him to the same fate as some of his victims—to be strangled, dismembered and dropped into a vat of acid. (The sentence caused a storm of controversy because it would violate both international and religious law.) There are truly evil people in this world, and the least we can do as a nation, or as human beings, is to execute them, if only to ensure that they never claim another victim—even if it's another prisoner.

Bob Schreib
Toms River, New Jersey

INSIDE THE WALLS

Like many of your readers, I'm in prison. It's refreshing to read the *Forum* each month because I feel it helps the public see past the smoke screen put up by the government with campaigns such as the war on drugs. It prefers to shove the problem behind walls instead of addressing it. By closing doors to the media, prison officials have prevented people from seeing what goes on here, and that only means trouble for the young men who don't fear the place. When will the politicians realize that the problem isn't the availability of drugs alone but the low self-esteem, abuse and lack of parental support that breed addicts? Those of us who are locked up are no closer to identifying the problems that got us here. We are too busy living in fear of each other, and dealing with the violence.

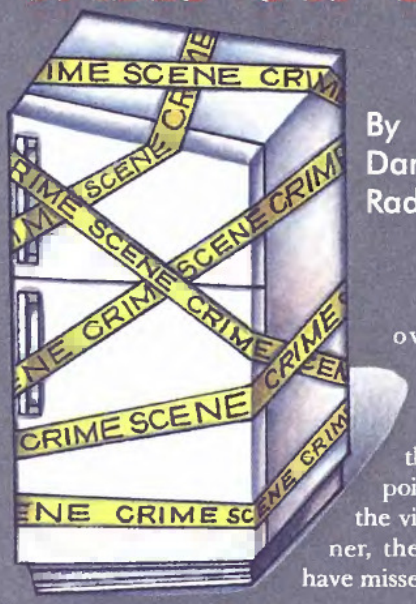
Juan Villegas
Vacaville, California

We would like to hear your point of view. Send questions, opinions and quirky stuff to: The Playboy Forum Reader Response, PLAYBOY, *680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Please include a daytime phone number. Fax number: 312-951-2939. E-mail: forum@playboy.com (please include your city and state).*

THE WAR ON FAT

it's time to crack down on the hefty

By Daniel Radosh



JEREMY MCDONALD

The evidence is in: Americans are fat. According to the National Institutes of Health, excess weight contributes to more than 300,000 deaths each year. That's more deaths than are caused by heroin and cocaine combined. In a culture that glamorizes overeating ("supersize it!"), defeating fat is a losing battle. But what if the government took the same hard-line approach that Barry McCaffrey has taken in the government's war on drugs? Here's what might happen:

* Because reaching children early is a key factor in keeping them slim, the government could launch a program to teach kids that fat kills, no exceptions. Students would be encouraged to turn in overweight parents. The classic drug-war ad, "This is your brain on drugs," could be altered to show a fat person eating the fried egg and then falling over dead.

* Congress could give police broad powers to search food laboratories (a.k.a. kitchens), particularly in the Midwest. Forfeiture laws would allow the cops to seize homes and cars used to store or transport high-fat foods. The U.S. Supreme Court could allow police to raid the homes of people suspected of being overweight. In some cases, innocents might die. However, the officers could point out that had the victim been thinner, the bullets would have missed.

* Congress would stress zero tolerance policies by establishing mandatory minimum sentences for the overweight. Spartan prison diets could save lives. The government would allow exceptions: If a suspect provided the names of people who sold, consumed or discussed fatty foods, he or she would escape punishment. Fat people related to judges or politicians also would be treated leniently.

* Employers would be allowed to conduct random weight checks and test workers' blood for heightened sugar levels. A person who consumed a single bite of a Twinkie over the weekend could expect to be fired.

* Critics would portray a war on fat as the problem, rather than fat itself. Some soft-on-fat lobbyists will claim there are medical benefits to high-calorie diets, such as preventing hunger. The government would not allow exceptions, or its thin citizens could be crushed, perhaps literally. The war must continue until the last fat lady sings.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT SEMEN

has ejaculate finally arrived?

By JAMES R. PETERSEN

The sexual revolution churns on, in small steps, almost unnoticed. This past winter, the UK's Channel 4 aired the first ejaculation ever seen on free broadcast television.

Taken from the classic 1972 porn film *Behind the Green Door*, the scene appeared in an installment of a documentary series titled *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*. The footage shows the semen in slow motion as it makes a graceful arc toward the face of porn star Marilyn Chambers. The producers chose not to show the penis that supplied the ejaculate; apparently because they felt the sight of semen leaving an actual erection was too controversial. One step at a time.

Although 17 viewers complained about the documentary to the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the public did not seem to notice or care. The standards board, in rejecting the complaints, ruled that the series didn't cross the boundaries of decency. A spokesperson for Channel 4 said of the series, "When you are making a program about pornography, you have to, at some stage, show what you are talking about."

They chose wisely. The *Green Door* scene remains the most artful use of come in movie history. The film made a star of Marilyn Chambers, a model whose wholesome face had graced boxes of Ivory Snow. The plot follows her abduction and initiation into a secret sex club. She services four men at once while an audience of dwarfs, fat women, masked men in tuxedos, stewardess types and street people break into an orgy. The soundtrack of muffled groans gives way to an aboriginal-psychedelic blend of cymbals, drums and woodwinds. At one point the film cuts to a close-up shot of an erection against a black background. The penis moves like a priest's aspergillum, dispensing great gobs of holy water onto Chambers' body. A hand encircles the penis and directs the ejaculate toward her forehead, lips, chin and neck. A third cut provides a double exposure of the actress, like some Janus-faced coin, the semen floating like bubbles in a lava lamp. As it drifts across the screen, faces melt into psychedelic colors.

Maybe you had to be there.

Green Door has been shown on countless TV screens, of course, delivered by VCR. But there's something momentous about the image's passing over neighborhoods via the ether. Imagine the debate in Congress if PBS decided to air the documentary. The pundits have barely recovered from Monica and her blue dress, and for more than one feminist, the concept of a presidential come shot is still hard to swallow. Radical feminists interpret flying semen as a sign that men want to degrade women, to keep them in their place. In Canada, antiporn groups convinced the government that protecting women from semen belonged in the category of human rights. It passed a law, still enforced, that forbids "any pictorial representation of ejaculation if it degrades or dehumanizes another person."

HUNGRY DOG STUDIO

Good grief. Men have been ejaculating on themselves for centuries, and not one has said, "Oh God, I just degraded myself." The only time it has led to trouble is described in the Bible: A fellow named Onan defied God and pulled out at the last minute when he was supposed to be impregnating his brother's widow. The come shot cost him his life.

Wendy McElroy, author of *XXX: A Woman's Right to Pornography*, points out that there are many cultural interpretations of come shots. Where fundamentalists see sin, some feminists find insult. But many women, McElroy notes, enjoy watching because they rarely see what an ejaculation looks like during intercourse—the penis is hidden from view. In that context, for that woman, "the come shot can be interpreted in an almost romantic way: The woman wishes to share in her lover's orgasm." Gary Day, editor of *Perspectives on Pornography: Sexuality in Film and Literature*, offers this: "What the man does in ejaculating over the woman is in a sense to replicate the role of the mother giving milk to the infant. If this analysis is accepted, then pornography does not show a hatred of women but rather a desire to become like them." (All right, we don't buy that either, but it's still an interesting hypothesis.)

The people who produce porn see the come shot as a marketing device: It demonstrates that the staged sex is real—the guy was actually turned on. That the woman ingests the semen or allows the semen to fall onto her face or body shows that she had a good time too, which is critical for men. The woman accepts his sexuality, and its by-product, without judgment.

Something is happening. Semen has had cameos in three recent mainstream movies. In *There's Something About Mary*, it makes a nice hair gel; in *American Pie*, a beer chaser; and in *Happiness*, a dog treat. An entire genre of porn films devotes itself to *bukkake*—scenes in which dozens of men come on a single woman. Think of it as a circle jerk, a standing ovation or merely capturing on film the symbolic tribute of millions of viewers.

BUSTED!

the crackdown on cleavage

By JOSHUA GREEN

Last year, when a team from Playboy.com made its first pilgrimage to Mardi Gras, it took along Bunny beads to toss to the most enthusiastic women in the crowds. This past March the magazine ran a pictorial featuring some of the women who earned beads, and the online crew planned its return.

The New Orleans Police Department expressed concern. It promised to crack down on the spontaneous display of breasts or rear ends. Officers spent hours pasting up 1000 posters in the French Quarter warning women they could be sent to jail and fined $1000 if they lifted their shirts.

A police spokesperson explained that the department's goal was to educate visitors that public nudity is illegal. "It's more than us just trying to be morality police," one officer said. "There are safety and crime issues."

We've poked around to see if others share the Big Easy's aversion to bare breasts. We're sad to report that things are not going well for public nudity. A council member in Galveston, Texas, concerned about antics at that city's Mardi Gras celebration, proposed an ordinance last year that would have banned even "simulated nudity" such as plastic breasts and buttocks, or T-shirts showing cartoon cleavage. In Florida, the American Association for Nude Recreation has established a legal defense fund and hired a lobbyist to fight bans on nude sunbathing at remote beaches. And in the nation's capital in March, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against a strip club that fought a local ordinance requiring its dancers to wear pasties and G-strings.

PETER PALOMBI

In an opinion written by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the Court ruled that while "nude dancing is expressive conduct that falls within the outer ambit of the First Amendment's protection," local governments can regulate the behavior if it threatens public health and safety. "Being 'in a state of nudity' is not an inherently expressive condition," Justice O'Connor wrote, and pasties and G-strings "leave ample capacity to convey the dancer's erotic message." Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas added that "the traditional power of government to foster good morals and the acceptability of the traditional judgment that nude public dancing itself is immoral have not been repealed by the First Amendment."

Those who follow women's breasts weren't surprised by the ruling. Something about exposed flesh riles people up. Last fall, Ohio State University suspended its women's rugby team from play after several members removed their shirts for a photo taken on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. School officials thought the stunt was "inappropriate." They later lifted the suspension, but the Midwest Rugby Union, the league's governing body, stepped in to bar the team for the remainder of the season. Said a league spokesman, "We felt that the girls needed some punishment."

The topper occurred when Michigan State's basketball team lost to Duke in the NCAA semifinals last year, and thousands of students took to the streets of the East Lansing campus. Men hoisted women onto their shoulders; the crowd shouted for them to show their tits, and many did. The mood wasn't entirely playful: Cars were overturned and burned, buildings were vandalized.

In the days after the unrest, police posted photos taken during the riot on the Internet, hoping to identify the culprits. Eventually police arrested 132 people, including nine women and one man charged with indecent exposure. The man had dropped his pants; the women had exposed their breasts.

The judges who heard their cases handed down tough sentences. A freshman received 10 days in jail. A junior served 17. A freshman who fought the charges argued that she had not destroyed property or participated in the riot, but only lifted her shirt playfully for an instant. Nevertheless, a local public-access television station managed to catch her 1.58-second flash on a videotape that ended up with the police. They made stills from the video and posted the images in an online "Hall of Shame" to generate tips.

A jury found the woman guilty. Last fall, a judge handed down her sentence, which her outraged uncle recounted in a letter to PLAYBOY: seven days in jail, two years' probation (during which she is subject to random urine testing), 215 hours of community service, $301 in fines and court costs and a "restitution" penalty of $2384.33—one percent of the $238,433 in damages caused during the riot. "One might not have liked what happened in particular cases," a university administrator said, "but there had to be consequences." The prosecutor said the flashers were indicted because they had incited the crowd.

Since when do breasts inspire anyone to burn and loot? If anything, female nudity immobilizes men and keeps them in one place. The police would have been wiser to deputize the flashers, not haul them to jail.

NEWSFRONT

what's happening in the sexual and social arenas

SIN CITY

PHOENIX—*A Republican state senator representing Sun City proposed a bill that would have repealed Arizona's longtime bans on adultery, sodomy, cohabitation*

and "lewd or lascivious acts" such as oral sex. Supporters of the repeal argued that the ban made criminals of most of the adult population, including many elderly couples who live together rather than marry to avoid losing Social Security benefits and paying higher taxes. The proposal died when the chairman of the rules committee refused to allow it to proceed for a vote. He said overturning the laws would contribute to "breaking down the fabric of society."

NIGHTIE NEEDS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—*The National Coalition for the Homeless turned down an offer from UndercoverWear to provide nightgowns for homeless women. The lingerie company had proposed a Nightie for the Needy campaign in which it would donate a nightgown and $1 to a shelter for each customer who sent in a photo of herself in her ugliest sleepwear. The company was planning to donate 20,000 nightgowns and $200,000. However, coalition executive director Mary Ann Gleason said the promotion "felt weird." A spokesperson for UndercoverWear says Gleason told her that the company "exaggerates wealth and exploits women, and that there was no way she would get involved with us."*

DISABLED JUSTICE

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA—*Last year, a seemingly sympathetic judge sentenced Louis Covar to seven years' probation for possession of marijuana. Covar, who has been paralyzed from the shoulders down since a diving accident in 1967, says he smokes marijuana because it's the only medicine he's found that eases pain in his neck without putting him to sleep. During sentencing, the judge told Covar, "I'm not telling you to violate the law, but keep it to yourself." Earlier this year, six police officers raided Covar's home and seized one and a quarter ounces of weed. The prosecutor insisted the disabled man had been selling marijuana from his home, and the judge revoked Covar's probation and sent him to prison to serve the seven years.*

PHOENIX—*A judge sentenced a woman with no arms, no right leg and only part of a left leg to a year in prison for possession of four ounces of marijuana. Deborah Quinn, 39, who says she smokes to relax, had been on probation for selling a small amount of marijuana to a police informant. The head of the state prison system protested, saying it was too costly to incarcerate Quinn and that she posed no escape risk or danger to the public. The prosecutor responded, "I'm sorry it's expensive, but drug dealers shouldn't get a third chance."*

EVIL OUTLINES

LAS VEGAS—*An elementary school principal removed a book titled Draw 50 Monsters from the school library because a Baptist minister complained that it teaches children to draw Satan. The book includes instructions for sketching horned creatures named B.L. Zeebub and Lewis E. Furr. The minister told reporters: "If it were a book that taught children to draw the pope or Billy Graham, the politically correct crowd would be enraged."*

LAST RIGHTS

LOS ANGELES—*Clad in full body armor and carrying automatic weapons, bank robber Emil Matasareanu and an accomplice fired more than 1100 rounds during a 1997 firefight with police, injuring 11 officers and six bystanders. Eventually, police shot Matasareanu 29 times and disarmed him. He bled to death on the scene. A year later, Matasareanu's family filed a federal lawsuit against the city and the officers, alleging that the police had violated Matasareanu's civil rights by not summoning an ambulance quickly enough. This past March, the family's lawyer argued before a federal jury that the officers "had gotten away with murder so far. It is heinous what Matasareanu did, but it was not punishable by the death penalty because he did not kill anybody, thank God." The jury deadlocked 9–3 in favor of the officers, and the judge declared a mistrial.*

VIRGIN CRUSADE

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND—*Providence College suspended and fined three students $1000 each for posting on campus pro-choice fliers that featured an image of the Virgin Mary and the words* HOW'S THIS FOR AN IMMACULATE CONCEPT: KEEP ABORTION SAFE AND LEGAL. *The president of the private Catholic institution compared the fliers to a swastika and racial slurs that had been painted on a dorm the previous fall.*

CROWD CONTROL

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND—*Concerned by a lack of civility in the stands, officials enforced two days of silence at Anne Arundel County youth basketball games. Only players and referees were allowed to speak. Recreation department employees reminded coaches, parents and fans who cheered, shouted or applauded to remain silent under threat of expulsion. Smiles, gestures and signs were allowed.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEVIN POPE

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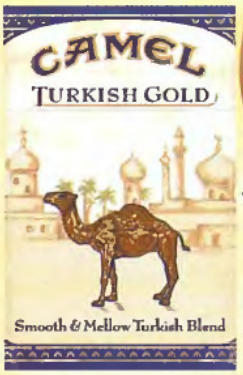

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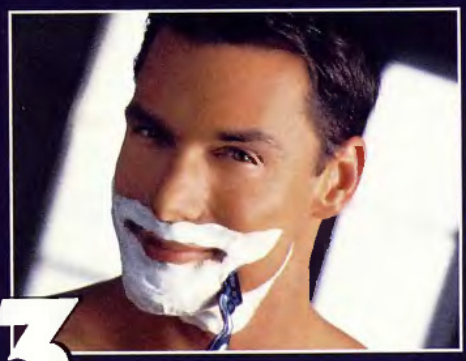

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: GEORGE CLOONEY

a candid conversation with the regular-guy star about being single in hollywood, buying a good motorcycle and why he nearly strangled the director of three kings

On Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley, George Clooney walks into the decidedly untrendy Du-Pars, a restaurant chain known for its homemade pies. The cashier brightens and calls out, "Hey George."

As Clooney drives past the security checkpoint at the Warner Bros. studio in Burbank, the guard grins and waves him in. At the studio commissary, the waiter jokes with him and the fellow selling newspapers and magazines gives him a thumbs-up. Clooney climbs behind the wheel of a golf cart and drives speedily from the commissary to his company, Maysville Pictures, waving to an extraordinary number of people walking past—technicians, actors, executives. On every television and film set, Clooney hangs out with the crew and plays basketball with them. He even knows their first names. On the set of ER, when separate lunch facilities were set up for the A-list—the stars, producers and directors—and the B-list—the crew—Clooney led a revolt. He embarrassed the producers into merging the lunch facilities. If anything outrages Clooney it's when someone throws his weight around. It has led him into a few fistfights over the years and to nearly strangle David Russell, director of Three Kings.

Before the visibility that came from ER, Clooney was himself an underdog, a working television and film actor whose career seemed stalled. He had worked on such television shows as The Facts of Life ("I wasn't very good"), Roseanne ("a nightmare") and Baby Talk ("embarrassing"). There were also about 15 failed pilots. He acted in a series of mediocre and largely forgettable films such as Red Surf, Return to Horror High and Return of the Killer Tomatoes.

ER changed all that. For five seasons, he played Doug Ross, the heartthrob pediatrician. Clooney, who is shrewd about his career, says he knew from the outset that ER would serve as his break. He fought to get on the show after he read the script for the pilot, pleading with John Wells, the show's executive producer, "Don't read anyone else. This is my part."

Leslie Moonves, former president of Warner Bros. Television and current president of CBS Entertainment, said, "Even before ER, Warner Bros. had him under contract because we felt it was only a question of time before he popped and became a major television star. There is, with George, this match of personality and talent. A lot of times you get one or the other, not both. With George, what you see on-screen is what you see offscreen. He can be a huge movie star."

His film career has suffered numerous lows, from the disappointing One Fine Day, opposite Michelle Pfeiffer, to the lackluster The Peacemaker, opposite Nicole Kidman, and the critically drubbed Batman and Robin. The more recent films Out of Sight and Three Kings won critics' praise for Clooney's performances, though box office receipts fell below expectations.

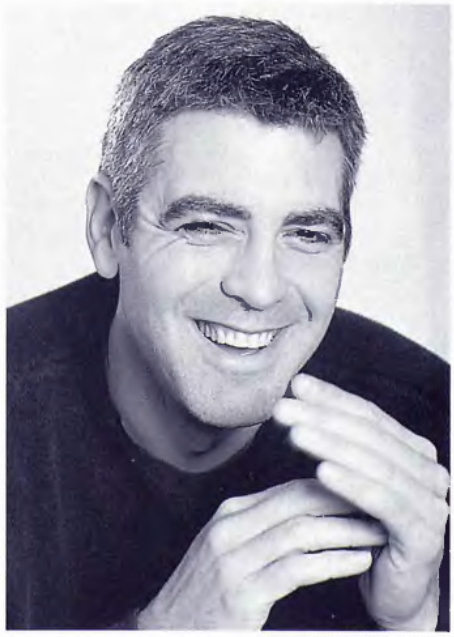
Despite this uneven record, Clooney earns as much as $10 million to star in a film. That places him just below stars like Tom Cruise, Mel Gibson and Harrison Ford. He hopes that will improve with the release of The Perfect Storm, which is based on the Sebastian Junger best-seller. The book is the story of fishermen in New England who battled a rare convergence of lethal storms in 1991. Clooney won the role only after Mel Gibson and other top stars passed on it.

Clooney grew up in the small Kentucky town of Augusta, 40 miles upriver from Cincinnati, where his father, Nick—brother of singer Rosemary Clooney and now host on the American Movie Classics channel—presided over a local talk show and became a popular news anchor. His mother, Nina, was a beauty queen. He also has an older sister, Ada, an accountant.

Clooney enrolled in Northern Kentucky University but spent more time partying than studying. He dropped out after his cousin and friend, Miguel Ferrer, son of Rosemary and her husband, José Ferrer, came to Lexington, Kentucky to make a low-budget

"The director goes, 'Hit me, you pussy. Hit me.' Then he got me by the throat and I went nuts. I had him by the throat. I was going to kill him. Kill him. It was truly, without exception, the worst experience of my life."

"They say I was a bad Batman, that it was my fault, that I buried the franchise. But the truth is, it was a big fucking project. I was pretty intimidated in that world. I did the best I could in the situation I was given."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIZUNO

"I'm only two years older than Brad Pitt, but I look a lot older, which used to greatly frustrate me. It doesn't anymore. I don't have to fit into that category and get trounced by Tom Cruise and Brad."

film about horse racing. On the basis of his good looks, Clooney was given a small role.

In 1982, with $300 in his pocket, Clooney drove to Los Angeles to try acting. He arrived at the doorstep of his aunt, Rosemary Clooney, in Beverly Hills, working as her chauffeur while living in the guest quarters. He took acting lessons, did construction work, sold women's shoes and, of course, partied.

Clooney was married for three years in the late Eighties to actress Talia Balsam. Most recently, he had a three-year relationship with Céline Balitran, a French law student and model. In the days before ER, he lived with Kelly Preston, now the wife of John Travolta. Several years ago, the actor faced down paparazzi and inspired numerous celebrities—ranging from Steven Spielberg to Tom Cruise and Madonna—to join him in threatening to boycott Entertainment Tonight because another Paramount show, Hard Copy, was invading the privacy of celebrities. The action by Clooney proved effective and Hard Copy backed off some of its more invasive coverage.

Soon after Clooney completed The Perfect Storm, New York Times entertainment reporter **Bernard Weinraub** *(who previously interviewed Clint Eastwood and Ben Affleck for* PLAYBOY*) met with Clooney for an interview. Here is Weinraub's report:*

"Clooney was friendly, talkative and without a shred of pretense. He spoke with remarkable candor about his career, the mistakes he's made and how he sees himself. But beneath his good-guy exterior, one couldn't help sensing that Clooney is intensely ambitious. I also noticed that he has far more knowledge about the business side of movies and television than most actors do. As he told the Los Angeles Times in 1996, 'When you've failed enough, you learn how to be good at the business. I'm probably better at the business side than I am at acting.'

"His Los Angeles home, which is behind a modest wooden sign that reads Casa de Clooney, is on three and a half acres and is protected by an electronic fence. It's a bit ramshackle, especially for a movie star. When I first met Clooney a few years ago at the house, I did a double take when I noticed a 150-pound pig snoring not too far from the pool and the tennis and basketball courts. The pig is still there. The home is now used as a crashpad for Clooney's friends, and every weekend, the actor and his buddies play basketball, watch movies and have a barbecue with their wives and girlfriends.

"Referring to the home, Clooney said, 'I was pushing it financially when I bought it. But now. . . .' He shrugged and smiled. Showing a gift for understatement, he said, 'I can afford the house. I got very lucky.'"

PLAYBOY: Are we leaping to a conclusion to assume that you've got it made when it comes to women? What's it like to be single and George Clooney?

CLOONEY: I had a much easier time before this.

PLAYBOY: Before you were a star?

CLOONEY: Before. Here's an example of how it works. I had never been to the Playboy Mansion and really wanted to go. When I finally did, it was for one of the Mansion's pajama parties, where I was hanging out with DiCaprio and Jim Carrey. We were all sort of protecting one another; you don't want to seem like you're desperate. I grew up with the magazine, so naturally I wanted to see the Grotto. When I got there, I was cornered by about 15 people, most of them pretty girls. But it's not like you might imagine. Instead, they all wanted to have their picture taken with me. When that happens, it's like you're a cardboard cutout for people to stand next to. It's not like talking to a girl and getting to know her. At the height of it, when there were people pulling at me from every direction and it was at its most embarrassing, some guy comes over and says, "Look at this shit, man! You got it made! Chicks are all over you." Meanwhile, I was thinking how much easier it was before this.

PLAYBOY: Was it really easier?

CLOONEY: Then it was just about being a guy talking to a girl and all the other stuff that's so interesting about dating—that dance you do. You see somebody at a party and lock eyes and eventually get closer and closer to each other. Somehow you find a way to talk and maybe—all that stuff. That's a turn-on. That has been taken away from me.

When you're on a show like ER, you're more famous than movie stars. People think they know you personally. They feel as if they own you.

PLAYBOY: Like the guy at the Grotto, many men we know probably won't feel too sorry for you.

CLOONEY: I know, and I'm not complaining, but it's not what it appears to be. Yes, I can get their attention, but I could get their attention even if I were Raymond Burr. They recognize anyone who is famous. If you were to ask what I miss about the anonymity that I used to have, it's that experience, that slow and natural getting to know someone—that kind of electricity.

PLAYBOY: But we imagine that few women ever reject George Clooney.

CLOONEY: It's not the way people think. I'm different from a lot of guys. I don't go up to girls I don't know in a bar and ask them to dance. I never have. Never. I've never gone up to somebody I don't know and asked them out. I just won't do it and never did, because I never wanted to take my ego, as fragile as any guy's, and hand it to some girl so that she could demolish it. To me it has always seemed like a stupid thing to do. So in terms of, like, "Hey, you want to go out?" I don't do it.

PLAYBOY: Are there places you can go where you're treated like a normal guy?

CLOONEY: In Los Angeles there are a million famous people around, so you are left alone. They see Mel Gibson at the grocery store, so they're not impressed with me. But if you go to any other town and walk into a bar, you can never have a normal experience. Once people have a few drinks, they get brave. All of a sudden there is a crowd of guys going, "*Dude!*" and hanging on to me. They want to buy me a drink and sit down and talk. But I've got my friends, see. I don't want a bunch of guys coming over to buy me drinks. The funny part is what I end up doing: I'm polite and I sit and talk to them. I wind up doing the things a girl would do in the same sort of situation at a bar.

PLAYBOY: The attention must have an impact on you. To put it bluntly, how do you avoid turning into an asshole?

CLOONEY: I've seen people become assholes who weren't assholes when I met them, that's for sure. But I have several advantages over lots of people who get famous. I didn't get famous until I was 33. Also, I've seen how temperamental an audience can be, how you can be famous one day and then lose it the next. I saw it close-up with my aunt, Rosemary. She was a huge star and then it all went away. What happened? She was still as good a singer as she ever was, but things changed. It had nothing to do with her talent. She didn't handle it well. Now she has made a great comeback, but she was angry and hurt and messed up for a long time. When she was 19 years old, everybody told her she was brilliant. But when she was 28, suddenly it was over. Rock and roll came in and pop music went out. Eight out of ten of the top singers were women, but then they all were men. So things changed. But because she believed them when they said she was brilliant when she was 19, she also believed them when they said she was terrible when she was 28. Of course, neither was true. So I learned from that.

PLAYBOY: What did you learn?

CLOONEY: Not to listen to what they say about you. I saw it pretty early on. I was doing a pilot for CBS. I did a reading around a table and everybody was laughing and Barbara Corday, the CBS executive, came over and said, "You're a genius! There's Robin Williams and there's you. You're lightning in a bottle." A week later, they fired all the other actors and rewrote the script and fired the director. Corday told me, "We want to bring an acting teacher in for you." I said, "Does that mean I'm no longer lightning in a

bottle?" Had I believed the first remark, the second one would have devastated me. But I knew better. So Rosemary's experience helped me keep it in perspective. The truth is, most actors I know aren't assholes. They often get that reputation because people around them are assholes. The people around you can treat people like shit and pretend they are doing it to protect you. Once, my assistant was rude to someone. I said, "You know, you represent me when you talk to people." So you have to be careful. And that's not to say people don't treat people badly in this business. I once had lunch with a movie producer who was completely dismissive and rude to our waiter, which told me all I needed to know about him. I know that someone like that will be nice to me right now—I'm in a position where he wants to be nice to me, since he needs something from me. But what happens if I'm not in that position anymore? If he treats everyone else dismissively, he'll treat me dismissively. He isn't the type of person you want to work with.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any people in your life who would tell you, "Hey, cut the shit, George," if you needed it?

CLOONEY: I've got eight buddies, the boys. They've been my friends for 20 years. Every Sunday we ride motorcycles and play basketball together. For Christmas this year, the boys came out and there were new bikes sitting out there—new Indians for each of them. The best part of having money is sharing it with your buddies. I lived on their closet floors when I was broke and they had money and were working. They've been through this whole ride with me. So now, when someone comes up to me and says, "You're so brilliant," they look over at me and go, "Man, can you believe that shit?"

PLAYBOY: Are they actors?

CLOONEY: Two thirds of them are. I met them when I first moved out here, in acting classes. Richard Kind, who's on *Spin City*, is one of them. When his father died of a heart attack, Richard called and said he was going to Trenton for the funeral. All the boys were immersed in work at that point and had no time, but I called them up and told them what happened. There were no commercial flights available, so I chartered a jet. We didn't tell him we were coming. We sat in the back of the synagogue and Richard was in front with his back to us. When he got up and started to talk about his dad, he saw us and started sobbing. He said, "I'm sorry, but I just saw my best friends back there." There was this amazing feeling that every one of these guys had dropped everything just to be there. That's what it's like. People like that keep you sane.

PLAYBOY: Have you noticed a difference between movie and television stardom?

CLOONEY: When you're on an immensely successful show, like *ER*, you're more famous than movie stars. People think they know you personally. It's natural: You've been in their homes. When people see Mel Gibson, they whisper, "That's Mel Gibson!" With me, they go, "George!" and then come over and put their arm around me. It's because they feel as if they know me. They feel as if they own you.

PLAYBOY: When *ER* took off, did good movie roles automatically follow?

CLOONEY: When I first started out in television, I took any job that came along. It was, Let's just get a job, any job. I fought to get *ER* and I got it and it changed my life. Then, when I started doing movies, the same thing happened. At first, I did anything that I could get. But I learned. In TV, I learned to focus on the script, but I didn't apply that lesson to movies. But the cliché is true: You can take a good script and make a bad movie. But you can't take a bad script and make a good movie.

PLAYBOY: Was there a turning point when you learned to be more selective?

CLOONEY: It came after *Batman*. I was out promoting it. When you have to go and

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sell a movie you know isn't very good, it's a trick. You get paid pretty well to do these things and it's your job to sell them, but it's difficult when you don't like the movie. You learn to say things that might help but that aren't lies: "It's the biggest movie I've ever seen." "It's got great effects." "Arnold's a blast to work with." But it is also embarrassing. So I promoted *Batman*, but then I said to myself, "I've now got money in the bank and there's no reason to do any movie unless it's one that I really want to do." With money in the bank, it is easy to be more selective, to make smarter decisions.

PLAYBOY: Why do you think *Batman* was such a disaster?

CLOONEY: It was just too big. By the time we made our *Batman* movie, they were just about selling toys. They got $25 million from Taco Bell before we started shooting. It's a moneymaking machine. The problem is, they needed to shake it up, change the entire format, for future *Batman* movies. They say I was a bad *Batman*, that it was my fault. They say I buried the franchise. But the truth is, it was a $150 million film and they paid me $10 million. I was pretty intimidated in that world. It was a big fucking project. Other actors in a situation like that, ones with more experience doing that type of movie, might have tried to get something better out of it. It wasn't well written in the first place. Someone with more experience might have pushed for a better script. But the truth of the matter is, I did the best I could in the situation I was given. I could whine about it, but when people say, "You sucked as Batman," I go, "Oh, I sucked as Batman." You take it on the chin. Look: I've also been in *Return of the Killer Tomatoes*, so I've been in worse films. Bring 'em on. It's all part of a career.

PLAYBOY: How about when critics say it?

CLOONEY: There's one reviewer for *USA Today* who says the same thing whenever one of my movies comes out. When *Out of Sight* came out, she goes, "Steven Soderbergh should be applauded for yanking a performance out of George Clooney." When *Three Kings* came out she goes, David Russell should be applauded for pulling a performance out of George Clooney. The only thing you can really do is sort of be OK with yourself and just say, "I'm doing the best I can."

PLAYBOY: A lot of people in the industry felt *Three Kings* was a risky project. Did that bother you?

CLOONEY: You can do riskier films as long as you're willing to dump your price. Early on, I was told they couldn't make *Three Kings* for the kind of money the studio had for the film. I said they could cut my money down by two thirds. It was just about doing a damn good movie. You have to gamble on yourself. You take a percentage of the back end, so if

the movie makes money, you make money. If it doesn't, you make the movie anyway.

PLAYBOY: What made you want to do that movie?

CLOONEY: David Russell wrote as good a script as I've ever read. I fought to get it. He wanted a lot of other actors before me. They went to Mel and to Nic Cage. I wanted to work on this movie. David is in many ways a genius, though I learned that he's not a genius when it comes to people skills.

PLAYBOY: Did you learn about that the hard way?

CLOONEY: I did. He yelled and screamed at people all day, from day one.

PLAYBOY: Did he yell at you?

CLOONEY: At me often and at someone daily. He'd throw off his headset and scream, "Today the sound department fucked me!" For me, it came to a head a couple of times. Once, he went after a camera-car driver who I knew from high school. I had nothing to do with his getting his job, but David began yelling and screaming at him and embarrassing him in front of everybody. I told him, "You can yell and scream and even fire him, but what you can't do is humiliate him in front of people. Not on my set, if I have any say about it." Another time he screamed at the script supervisor and made her cry. I wrote him a letter and said, "Look, I don't know why you do this. You've written a brilliant script, and I think you're a good director. Let's not have a set like this. I don't like it and I don't work well like this." I'm not one of those actors who likes things in disarray. He read the letter and we started all over again. But later, we were three weeks behind schedule, which puts some pressure on you, and he was in a bad mood. These army kids, who were working as extras, were supposed to tackle us. There were three helicopters in the air and 300 extras on the set. It was a tense time, and a little dangerous, too. David wanted one of the extras to grab me and throw me down. This kid was a little nervous about it, and David walked up to him and grabbed him. He pushed him onto the ground. He kicked him and screamed, "Do you want to be in this fucking movie? Then throw him to the fucking ground!" The second assistant director came up and said, "You don't do that, David. You want them to do something, you tell me." David grabbed his walkie-talkie and threw it on the ground. He screamed, "Shut the fuck up! Fuck you," and the AD goes, "Fuck you! I quit." He walked off.

It was a dangerous time. I'd sent him this letter. I was trying to make things work, so I went over and put my arm around him. I said, "David, it's a big day. But you can't shove, push or humiliate people who aren't allowed to defend themselves." He turned on me and said, "Why don't you just worry about your fucked-up act? You're being a dick. You want to hit me? You want to hit me? Come on, pussy, hit me." I'm looking at him like he's out of his mind. Then he started banging me on the head with his head. He goes, "Hit me, you pussy. Hit me." Then he got me by the throat and I went nuts. Waldo, my buddy, one of the boys, grabbed me by the waist to get me to let go of him. I had him by the throat. I was going to kill him. Kill him. Finally, he apologized, but I walked away. By then the Warner Bros. guys were freaking out. David sort of pouted through the rest of the shoot and we finished the movie, but it was truly, without exception, the worst experience of my life.

PLAYBOY: Did you resolve things? Would you ever work with him again?

CLOONEY: Life's too short.

PLAYBOY: You followed *Three Kings* with a live version of the movie *Fail Safe* for television. With a live performance, you could have fallen on your ass. Why did you do it?

CLOONEY: People like live TV because of the thrill of the chance of seeing you screw up. It's like watching the Indy 500 and waiting for a crash. But I like sticking my neck out. It can get snapped, but it's a great feeling when you get through it. That's the exciting part. The unpredictability. If television's going to succeed now, you have to stick your neck out. You can't say the word fuck on TV. You can't say shit. You can't show nudity. So *The Sopranos* is always going to be on, because they're going to take it further. *The Sopranos* is far superior to anything else on television. How does *Law and Order* compete with that?

PLAYBOY: *The Perfect Storm* will be coming out shortly. What led to that choice?

CLOONEY: I read the book and knew that it could be a great action film, as well as a great American tragedy. I'm under contract with Warner Bros., so when they got the rights, I told them I wanted to do it. They kept talking about Mel Gibson playing the part, but I finally got it when Mel fell out.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel less than honored to be a producer's or director's second choice for a role?

CLOONEY: Not at all, since I'm a businessman. If I were a producer or director trying to put a project together, I'd go with Mel Gibson, too. If Harrison Ford had been in *Out of Sight* or Mel Gibson was in *Three Kings*, those movies would have made more money. It's a reasonable consideration. I used to sell ladies' shoes and men's suits. I learned that if you just keep putting out a good product, customers will find their way to you eventually.

PLAYBOY: The wild storms in *Perfect Storm* look very realistic. How were those shot?

CLOONEY: Some of the movie was shot on a sound stage, but a lot was shot in a very real boat off Dana Point in rough seas. Everyone was throwing up, though it didn't get to me. We got the shit kicked out of us out there. For one scene, I was

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yelling at Mark Wahlberg and in between words in the take he would turn around and go, *Aaaarrrh*.

PLAYBOY: Are there any movie roles that you would have died to have gotten?

CLOONEY: The part that Brad Pitt played in *Thelma and Louise*. It was down to three actors, including Brad and me, at one time. I read about five times with Geena Davis. I thought I was going to get it, but Brad did. The part catapulted him. I didn't watch the movie for a couple of years and then rented it on tape one night. I watched it and, of course, he's perfect in the role, better than I would have been.

PLAYBOY: Of the movies that you've been in, has one been the most personally satisfying?

CLOONEY: *Out of Sight*. Steven Soderbergh is as good a director as I have ever worked with. The script was perfect. It didn't do well, but that wasn't our fault. We did everything right.

PLAYBOY: Why didn't it make it at the box office?

CLOONEY: It was badly marketed. It came out at a bad time—in the summer, and it isn't a summer film. Timing is important. *Three Kings* made $60 million, which is great, but it could have made more. They didn't know how to market it. Is it a war film? Is it an action film?

PLAYBOY: Why did you get into acting?

CLOONEY: In college, I had studied broadcasting and was no good at it. My father had been an anchorman who was greatly respected. He was really good at what he did, and I wasn't nearly as good as my father. From the beginning, I was being compared with him. It's the George W. Bush thing. So, if I wasn't going to do that, then what? I couldn't sing; Rosemary had that covered in our family. Acting was never really a consideration. But then my cousin and friend, Miguel Ferrer, who is the son of Rosemary and her husband, José Ferrer, came to Lexington to make a low-budget film about horse racing. They gave me a small part. It was a cheesy, awful film that never came out, but I was seduced by how attractive it was. It was something I really felt I could do.

PLAYBOY: Did you take acting in college?

CLOONEY: In college, I basically partied a lot. You gotta understand. We're a very strict Catholic family. Curfew was at nine P.M. when I was a senior in high school. So I got out of the house and thought, Oh my God! People don't ever really like to talk about this anymore, but there was a period of time when blow was considered OK, like it won't hurt you at all. It was almost mainstream. All the designer drugs were OK—Quaaludes and blow. So that was the time in college for me: Drugs and chasing girls. I came from a town of 1500 people to Cincinnati. I would visit class every once in a while and stop by and go, "How's everybody doing?" I was still a responsible kid, but I didn't take school seriously. I had jobs. I sold men's suits and shoes and worked in stockrooms of department stores, and I cut tobacco when it was the season. I was paying for my thing along the way. But I quit school.

PLAYBOY: What brought you out to Los Angeles?

CLOONEY: I went to LA to try to get work as an actor. Before I left, I went back to my hometown and cut tobacco to make some money. I made about $450 at $3 an hour. I put the money into my 1976 Monte Carlo. It was rusted all over and ran on only four cylinders. It drank oil the whole way out. I drove for two days straight. The car had ignition problems, so I couldn't shut it off. I left it running and slept on the side of the road for an hour and then kept going. I drove it all the way across the country until it sputtered into Beverly Hills.

PLAYBOY: Where your Aunt Rosemary lived?

CLOONEY: Yes. I did odd jobs around the house for her. I drove her around—her and Martha Raye and Helen O'Connell and Margaret Whiting. Martha Raye was the greatest. She's a broad, that lady. She was a big drinker. I was with her in Kentucky with my Aunt Rosemary and she fell asleep on the floor in my sister's room. When she woke up, she couldn't find her dentures. She had hidden them in an old Easter basket underneath my sister's bed.

After that, I got a job doing construction work. I spent the first five months basically partying and doing all those stupid things you do. But I got into an acting class. I had no money, so I worked cleaning up the theater. At the time it was like $300 a month for an acting class that met twice a week, but I worked for the tuition.

PLAYBOY: What were your first professional acting jobs?

CLOONEY: My first job was a Japanese commercial for Panasonic. My first real acting job was on *Riptide*, for which I got my SAG card. I played a bad guy, holding three girls hostage. I didn't have an agent, so I would call up and pretend to be an agent. I didn't have any transportation, so I rode a 10-speed from my aunt's house.

PLAYBOY: For an unknown actor, you didn't have the usual problems in finding work.

CLOONEY: Well, there was a period when I couldn't get hired. I was being very careful in auditions. Then I thought, I'm a fucking baseball player. I realized that I needed to treat acting like I treated baseball. I said, "From now on, I'm not going to wonder if I'm going to hit the ball. I'm going to knock the hell out of it." Actors go into auditions thinking, Oh God, they're going to hate me, they're going to hate me. I started to come in selling confidence, not even my acting skills. The best actor never gets the job when they audition. Never. Especially in television. The guy who gets the job is somebody who comes in and delivers every day. It's often looks more than anything. So I just changed my attitude. I thought, From here on out, I cannot lose a job. I'll do whatever it takes. So I'd come in with a dog under my arm for some scene. I'd pull a champagne bottle and phone out of my jacket and do the scene. People were like, "What the fuck is that?" I just thought, Fuck it. It's *where* I'm going to hit the ball, not *if* I'm going to hit it.

PLAYBOY: Apparently, it worked.

CLOONEY: Yeah, and I worked my way up through the television ranks. I kept getting series: *Facts of Life*, *Roseanne*, *Sunset Beat* and *Sisters*. But it was *ER* that changed my life. The timing was good because I was older. There's always a little more weight added to you as you get older. Maybe you're taken a little more seriously. At 31, I still looked like a young man. Now, though I'm only two years older than Brad Pitt, I look a lot older, which used to greatly frustrate me. It doesn't anymore. As I got older, I saw that it separated me from Tom Cruise and Brad. I don't have to fit into someone else's category and just get trounced by Tom and Brad. I could be in my own category.

PLAYBOY: You've described your late 20s as a difficult time for you.

CLOONEY: First of all, my body changed. I always had been able to eat whatever I wanted and do whatever I wanted, and all of a sudden I put on 25 pounds and didn't even know it. I went from 155 or 160 to 185 overnight. Plus, I was living with someone and felt sort of cornered. I was on a show, *Roseanne*, that wasn't much fun. They didn't want me there in the first place, but they were stuck with me because I was under contract. I had a bleeding ulcer. I was in a house I couldn't afford.

PLAYBOY: What did you do?

CLOONEY: I know this sounds sort of putzy, but I went to this herbal guy. He's not a Mr. Hocus-Pocus, which it sounds like, but I was in unbelievable pain. The guy said that a lot of ulcers are viral. He gave me these things to take and I thought, Screw it, I'll try it. And it worked. I still take them, 12 years later. And something else happened. I was really close to my Uncle George, who started off as Rosemary's manager on the road. He was a B-17 bomber pilot in World War II, a great, beloved character. But he was also a drunk and a mean one. He got lung cancer and was dying. I was with him through his last hours. I was sitting there holding his hands, thinking, It's so stupid that he's dying like this. He looked at me and said, "What a waste." He kept saying, "What a waste." In my world, meanwhile, everything seemed insurmountable. But I went home and thought, Let's change things. It's time. I

quit the job and sold the house and ended the relationship. I didn't want to wake up at 65 and say, "What a waste."

PLAYBOY: You were married for three years. Since then, you have said that you blame yourself for the break-up.

CLOONEY: When you are married to someone who becomes famous, every time you turn around you have to see your ex on magazines or TV. It seemed unfair. So when someone asks me about the marriage, the fair thing for me to do is to say that I take responsibility for it. It isn't fair that she should have to address anything.

PLAYBOY: Are you still friendly with your ex-wife?

CLOONEY: I saw her about four or five months ago. She's an actress. She was going to have a baby and she looked really happy. We talked for half an hour, but it was awkward. It's strange to see someone you were married to and is a stranger nine years later. But it was nice to see her.

PLAYBOY: Your friends say that your real love is your work.

CLOONEY: Yes. I've made it difficult to have a relationship, because my first love is work and my second love is my friends. That will change, I'm sure. There will be someone somewhere along the way who will knock me for a loop again and I'll be willing to sacrifice everything. But for now, I'm driven by work. A lot of people rely on me now. I can't just take off to the south of France for a week with some girl and have a great time. I feel the responsibility and think it would be wrong not to.

PLAYBOY: Are you seeing anybody now?

CLOONEY: Yeah, a little bit. I've been seeing a girl. You know, it's weird. I go through these weird phases in my life. Celine and I broke up in April of last year. We'd been going out for almost three years. It probably wasn't the time to be going out with anybody, but I did recently start dating someone. But I work 12-hour days even when I don't work 12-hour days. So that's still my focus right now.

PLAYBOY: Your home life is decidedly nondomestic, sort of a modern *Animal House*.

CLOONEY: People have written about the house as if it were indeed a frat house, the He-Man Woman Haters' Club. But in truth, we have a case of beer that's sat in there for a year. We have joked that we should make it another Playboy Mansion, but we don't have the balls to do it. Most of the time I live in the house by myself. But every Sunday, the boys do come over. We get up at seven in the morning and take the motorcycles out for about a four-hour ride. Then we play basketball from noon to four, and after that we hit the spa. For dinner, we grill steaks with all the wives and girlfriends and their kids and it's a big party. It's a Playboy Mansion but without all the sex. Maybe that's something I ought to change——

PLAYBOY: And that animal we saw running around your house—it's a pig, right?

CLOONEY: It is.

PLAYBOY: Why a pig?

CLOONEY: He was a little tiny baby when I was doing *Roseanne*. I saw him and said, "I want that." I had a Harley then. I would put him in the saddle bags and ride. Now he's as big as the bike. I could ride him to work. Man, I love him, but you learn as you get older to be more careful about impulse buying.

PLAYBOY: Whether it's a film or a television set, how do you deal with the opportunities that present themselves for on-set romances?

CLOONEY: They're dangerous. They can become a nightmare. If you're doing series television and you have to go to work together every day for nine months, what happens when you break up? What the hell do you do? At least in a movie, it's four or five months and you're gone.

PLAYBOY: Is the temptation there, however? Does it get lonely without a permanent girl when you're on the set?

CLOONEY: Sure. But I've been as miserable in a relationship that should have been over as I have without one.

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PLAYBOY: Is it true that Michelle Pfeiffer and Nicole Kidman each bet $10,000 with you?

CLOONEY: They bet that I would have a kid by the time I'm 40 [*laughs*]. I'm 39, so I have time. I told them I was going to get a vasectomy and make $20,000.

PLAYBOY: Seriously, do you think you'll marry again and have children?

CLOONEY: I don't think I'll marry, at least not the way I think now. I didn't enjoy it that much. It's not that I didn't love my wife, I just thought that ultimately I wasn't that good at it.

PLAYBOY: Will Pfeiffer and Kidman lose their money? Is it unlikely that you'll have children down the road?

CLOONEY: I think the reason to get married is if you're having kids. You can't take that lightly. I don't have anything in me like most people have that says you have to reproduce. It's not part of me. If that is selfish, it's selfish. But what I do know is that I will not half-ass it with children. I won't be a fairly good father. If that means not having kids, then I will not have kids. Kids are the ultimate responsibility. I have a lot of time, and things change. My mind changes, but right now I don't have even a soft lean toward that. My dad and I were once talking about longevity. I said that I love the idea of doing movies because they will be around long after I'm gone. I said, "Maybe the movies are my children." My dad said, "When you have children and your children have children, some element of you will continue on. It's different." I said, "But that happens with film, doesn't it? People can flip on your movie and watch it in 100 years." He said, "But how many famous people do you know from 100 years ago?" The truth is, the immortality you are really trying to buy has a time limit on it. Even though you think it's immortality, after 30 or 40 years it's pretty much over.

PLAYBOY: What impact did your father have in terms of your personality?

CLOONEY: Everything. He still does. I still talk to him all the time. My father is the most ethical guy I know, even though his ethics have sometimes been detrimental to his career financially. Ultimately what I learned from him was that you treat people fair and that way you can be pissed off when you're treated unfair. There's a great fairness in my father. That doesn't mean that he doesn't have an incredibly hot temper, but I learned to value fairness and ethics over money.

PLAYBOY: Was your mother's influence similar?

CLOONEY: My mom taught me how to be scrappy. My dad didn't scrap; he relied on my mother to be scrappy. In fact, he sort of couldn't function without her. My mom buys a table saw and goes out and builds a bar in the house. My dad couldn't possibly do that. She doesn't do it the right way, but she does it. She taught me that by example. I put in a chandelier myself this morning before I came in. I hung it up and wired it and had no real idea what I was doing. That's like my mom. I always liked that quality. It gets you out of situations.

PLAYBOY: Did you inherit your parents' politics?

CLOONEY: My parents were the biggest liberal Democrats. They both voted for George McGovern.

PLAYBOY: Do you share their liberal leanings? Will you support anyone in this year's presidential race?

CLOONEY: If Cuomo ran, I would give him all my money. He's the best speaker we've had since Martin Luther King and JFK. As it is, I'll vote for Gore. It's hard because I don't jump up and down about Gore. It's a tough thing when the best speaker in a race is fucking Pat Buchanan, who is the devil.

PLAYBOY: What do you do when you're not working?

CLOONEY: The things I truly enjoy are tough to do. Like going to baseball games. That's really tough to do. I don't want to go and sit in the groove box with a bunch of owners. I don't want to go to the Cincinnati Reds games and sit with Marge Schott and talk about George Bush. It's not an interest of mine. What I want to do is go sit in the good seats with a bunch of people and scream and yell and have a beer. I can't do that much. You become part of the spectacle.

PLAYBOY: Do you worry that you—like any movie star—have a limited window of opportunity to stay on top?

CLOONEY: I'm a 39-year-old man. In the way I was raised, this is the time when you make your mark. In your 20s, you figure out what it is you're going to be. You do a lot of different jobs. By your late 20s, you sort of have some idea of what it is. Then you spend your 30s and a lot of your 40s making your mark.

PLAYBOY: What do you do in your 50s?

CLOONEY: You spend your 50s being able to reap the benefits of the work that you've done.

PLAYBOY: Is acting in TV and movies a young man's game?

CLOONEY: I'm enjoying being in the luckiest acting category there is, at least for now. I'm a 39-year-old white man in an industry that seems to be giving the actors in that category the biggest chunk of the pie. There's nothing right about that. I'm not celebrating it as if I think that's the way it should be. But that's where I am and that's what it is. The truth is that 55-year-old men are still leading men, too. I don't know that that's what I want to be, though the one career that is great to watch is Paul Newman's. Even though he's the handsomest guy that ever lived and is always a leading man, he approaches his work as if he were a character actor. That's the way you're going to survive. Now, how many of those guys really are there? Not many.

PLAYBOY: But some of these guys—Paul Newman notwithstanding—seem desperate to stay 38. Actresses are particularly affected by aging.

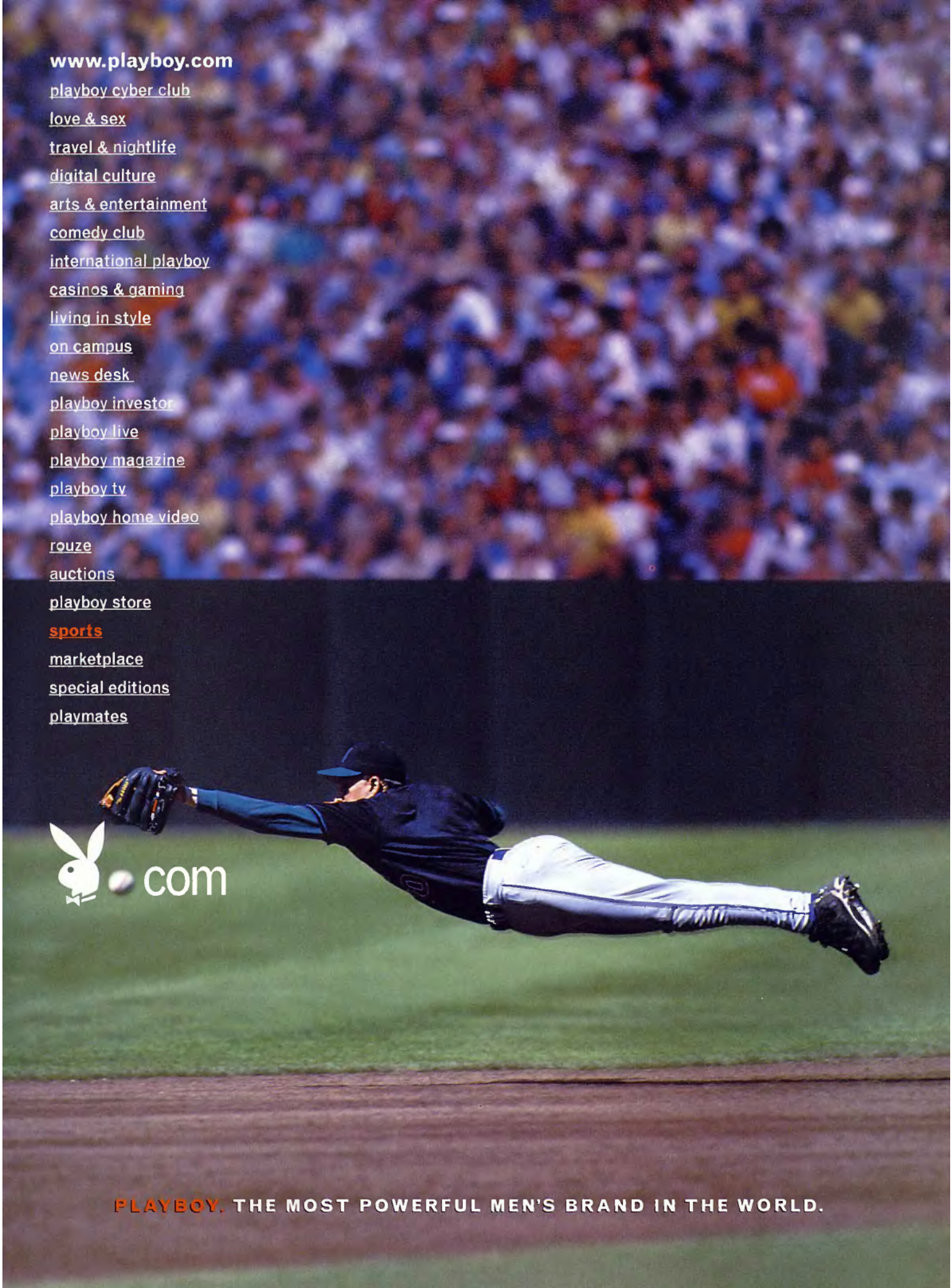
CLOONEY: It happens with women quicker because it's easier to see. People who make films are already looking around for the next 27-year-old that they can schtup. They're saying, "This older actress is now a mother figure and not a sexual figure anymore. I'm going to go look for a sexual figure." It always comes down to fucking in a weird way.

PLAYBOY: Fucking?

CLOONEY: I've been in meetings with a head of a studio who I suppose will have to remain nameless. We were talking about an actress who is arguably one of the best actresses ever. She was interested in working on this project with us and the head of the studio says, "Well, I wouldn't fuck her." And I go, "Well, she wouldn't fuck you! Fuck you!" Even though the role had no sex in it and there was no sexual tension, it came down to fucking. It's all about that. If you look at rock stars who have survived over 20 or 30 years, they stayed thin and sort of sexual in a weird way. The Stones, Bowie. They still look good. The guys who kind of got fat get a little sad. It happens with leading men, too. The secret to me is you have to look your age. But you have to look the best you can at your age. You don't want to try to look younger, because you'll look wrong. You dye your hair, you look wrong. You wear a bad toupee, you look wrong. You wear makeup to hide things, you get your eyes done, you look wrong. It happens all the time. I'm not interesting in playing that game.

PLAYBOY: You seem to enjoy being a movie star, but you also want to be seen as a normal guy. Can you have it both ways?

CLOONEY: I love Spencer Tracy. Love him. He's a hero of mine. I heard he never wore makeup, so I've never worn makeup, ever. I won't put it on in any movie. I'm dark complexioned, so I can get away with it. I cut my own hair. It's sort of still being scrappy. It makes you feel like a guy still. I still can take my motorcycle apart and put it back together again. It keeps you feeling like you're still a guy. You have to fight for that. What happens when you're famous is that you get a flat tire and come back and your assistants have fixed it for you. You'll come into a bar and it's really fun and exciting and a guy comes over and says, "Mr. Clooney, come with us," and they take you to a private room in the back. You're thinking, I don't want to be in here. I want to be out there. What the fuck am I doing in here? So you have to fight it as much as you can. It's possible to be a guy with your friends. You get on your motorcycles, you head out on the road. It's as good as it gets.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fiction

BY MARIO PUZO

when war breaks out among the mafia dons, two deadly hit men get the call. the creator of *the godfather* completes his landmark trilogy

When the Sturzo twins, Franky and Stace, pulled into Heskow's driveway, they saw four very tall teenagers playing basketball on the small house court. Franky and Stace got out of their big Buick, and John Heskow came out to meet them. He was a tall, pear-shaped man; his thin hair neatly ringed the bare top of his skull, and his small blue eyes twinkled. "Great timing," he said. "There's someone I want you to meet."

The basketball game halted. Heskow said proudly, "This is my son, Jocko." The tallest of the teenagers stuck out his huge hand to Franky.

"Hey," Franky said. "How about giving us a little game?"

Jocko looked at the two visitors. They were about six feet tall and seemed in good shape. They both wore Ralph Lauren polo shirts, one red and the other green, with khaki trousers and rubber-soled shoes. They were amiable-looking, handsome men, their craggy features set with graceful confidence. They were obviously brothers, but Jocko could not know they were twins. He figured them to be in their early 40s.

"Sure," Jocko said, with boyish good nature.

Stace grinned. "Great! We just drove 3000 miles and have to loosen up."

Jocko motioned to his companions, all well over six feet, and said, "I'll take them on my side against you three." Since he was the best player, he thought this would give his father's friends a chance.

"Take it easy on them," John Heskow said to the kids. "They're just old

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN THOMPSON

guys futzing around."

It was midafternoon in December, and the air was chilly enough to spur the blood. The cold Long Island sunlight, pale yellow, glinted off the glass roofs and walls of Heskow's flower sheds, his front business.

Jocko's young buddies were mellow and played to accommodate the older men. But suddenly Franky and Stace were whizzing past them for layup shots. Jocko stood amazed at their speed; then they were refusing to shoot

"what if the don still has old friends? we don't just get killed. we'll spend a couple of hours in hell first."

and passing him the ball. They never took an outside shot. It seemed a point of honor that they had to swing free for an easy layup.

The opposing team started to use their height to pass around the older men but astonishingly enough got few rebounds. Finally, one of the boys lost his temper and gave Franky a hard elbow in the face. Suddenly, the boy was on the ground. Jocko, watching everything, didn't know exactly how it happened. But then Stace hit his brother in the head with the ball and said, "Come on. Play, you shithead." Franky helped the boy to his feet, patted him on the ass and said, "Hey, I'm sorry." They played for about five minutes more, but by then the older men were obviously tuckered out and the kids ran circles around them. Finally, they quit.

Heskow brought sodas to them on the court, and the teenagers clustered around Franky, who had charisma and had shown pro skills on the court. Franky hugged the boy he had knocked down. Then he flashed a man-of-the-world grin, which set pleasantly on his angular face.

"Let me give you guys some advice from an older guy," he said. "Never dribble when you can pass. Never quit when you're 20 points down in the last quarter. And never go out with a woman who owns more than one cat."

The boys all laughed.

Franky and Stace shook hands with the kids and thanked them for the game, then followed Heskow inside the pretty, green-trimmed house. Jocko called after them, "Hey, you guys are good!"

Inside the house, John Heskow led the two brothers upstairs to their room. It had a very heavy door with a good lock, the brothers noticed as Heskow let them in, locking the door behind them.

The room was big, a suite really, with an attached bathroom. It had two single beds—Heskow knew the brothers liked to sleep in the same room. In a corner was a huge trunk banded with steel straps and a heavy metal padlock. Heskow used a key to unlock the trunk and then flung the lid open. Now exposed to view were several handguns, automatic weapons and munitions boxes, in an array of black geometric shapes.

"Will that do?" Heskow asked.

Franky said, "No silencers."

"You won't need silencers for this job."

"Good," Stace said. "I hate silencers. I can never hit anything with a silencer."

"OK," Heskow said. "You guys take a shower and settle in, and I'll get rid of the kids and cook supper. What did you think of my kid?"

"A very nice boy," Franky said.

"And how do you like the way he plays basketball?" Heskow said with a flush of pride that made him look even more like a ripened pear.

"Exceptional," Franky said.

"Stace, what do you think?" Heskow asked.

"Very exceptional," said Stace.

"He has a scholarship to Villanova," Heskow said. "NBA all the way."

•

When the twins came down to the living room a little while later, Heskow was waiting. He had prepared sautéed veal with mushrooms and a huge green salad. There was red wine on the table, which was set for three.

They all sat down. They were old friends and knew each other's history. Heskow had been divorced for 13 years. His ex-wife and Jocko lived a couple of miles west in Babylon. But Jocko spent a lot of time here, and Heskow had been a constant and doting father.

"You were supposed to arrive tomorrow morning," Heskow said. "I would have put the kid off if I knew you were coming today. By the time you phoned, I couldn't throw him and his friends out."

"That's OK," Franky said. "What the hell."

"You guys were good out there with the kids," Heskow said. "You ever wonder if you could have made it in the pros?"

"Nah," Stace said. "We're too short, only six feet. The eggplants were too big for us."

"Don't say things like that in front of the kid," Heskow said, horror-stricken. "He has to play with them."

"Oh no," Stace said. "I would never do that."

Heskow relaxed and sipped his wine. He always liked working with the Sturzo brothers. They were both so genial—they never got nasty like most of the scum he had to deal with. They had an ease in the world that reflected the ease between them. They were secure, and it gave them a pleasant glow.

The three of them ate slowly, casually. Heskow refilled their plates directly from the frying pan.

"I always meant to ask," Franky said to Heskow. "Why did you change your name?"

"That was a long time ago," Heskow said. "I wasn't ashamed of being Italian. But you know, I look so fucking German. With blond hair and blue eyes and this nose. It looked really fishy, my having an Italian name."

The twins both laughed, an easy, understanding laugh. They knew he was full of shit, but they didn't mind.

When they finished their salad, Heskow served double espresso and a plate of Italian pastries. He offered cigars but they refused. They stuck to their Marlboros, which suited their Western faces.

"Time to get down to business," Stace said. "This must be a big one, or why did we drive 3000 fucking miles? We could have flown."

"It wasn't so bad," Franky said. "I enjoyed it. We saw America firsthand. We had a good time. The people in the small towns are great."

"Excellent," Stace said. "But still, it was a long ride."

"I didn't want to leave any traces at the airports," Heskow said. "That's the first place they check. And there will be a lot of heat. You boys don't mind heat?"

"Mother's milk to me," Stace said. "Now, who the fuck is it?"

"Don Raymonde Aprile." Heskow

(continued on page 150)

"You're a real sweetie, Dino—but this ain't what I mean by protected sex!"

Nice Chalupas!

how many reasons do you need to live la vida loca?

Go ahead, admit it. The instant you saw this feature, a tingle went up your spine and a few choice words sprang to mind. Words such as hot, spicy, passionate, romantic. Or perhaps your thoughts traveled immediately to exotic origins. Havana, Buenos Aires, Mexico City. When you think Latin, you think of the climate. Hot, steamy days; sultry nights. And those soothing siestas required to get you through the days and get the most out of the nights. When you think Latin, you think dancing. Tango, rumba, samba, bossa nova, macarena, merengue. And when the dancing starts, anything can happen.

There definitely is a quality about Latin women that evokes an instantaneous response. We feel it is our responsibility to explore a little further. Latin women are free-spirited, quick-tempered, uninhibited and unpredictable. But beneath the lively exterior, they also convey an aura of mystery and intrigue. We've managed to strip away just a little of the mystery. We trust you'll find these women even more intriguing.

So sit back and relax. Mix yourself a margarita or take the cap off a frosty *cerveza*. Nibble on some chips and salsa or light up your favorite Cuban cigar. Just be sure to savor *la buena vista*.

Asia Mendez (below), who hails from southern California, is the proprietor of a nail salon and proud owner of a rottweiler who competes in shows. Here, she shows how to get a splashy pictorial started in the right direction. At right: Latin singer Jon Secada finds himself in an enviable position—surrounded by a quartet of lovelies (from left to right): Lianna Grethel, Shontell Lugo, Paola Arovena and Iveth Cortez. To treat yourself to a more detailed view of these spectacular beachfront properties, turn the page. To hear the latest Latin sounds of Secada, pick up his new CD, *Better Part of Me* (Sony Music).

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD FEGLEY

When she's not hitting the books at a local community college, Miriam Gonzalez (inset, opposite) of Florida turns heads at Hooters. And Chilean native Poola Aravena (opposite) is studying broadcasting. Her ambition: She wants to become a Playmate.

Californio native Monica Mendez (top right) spent her high school years in Winnipeg before settling in Los Angeles. This may exploin how she came to excel at snowboording as well as surfing. Amelia Garduño (obove) is the oldest of seven in what she calls "a typical big Latin family." She feels a sense of responsibility to show her siblings to "always believe in themselves, no matter what adversities they face." Amelia hopes someday to start a foundation to help those in need. In the meontime, she helps lucky kids learn to play soccer. Nina Santoyo-Bradley (right) is the heod of o ticket agency in Texas. She plans to open her own swimsuit boutique.

Miami madel Lianna Grethel (inset, apposite) enjoys a raft of hobbies, including dancing, harseback riding and photography. She alsa studied philosophy in college in Colombia. Leggy lounge hostess Shantell Lugo (left) took time out to share this philosophy: "Life is too short to fret over the past or future. The present is just that, a gift. So enjoy." We'll smoke to that.

The lovely pair sharing the lucky choir (top left) are Mexican-born Lucia Loza (on the left) ond Yvette Gorcia, o lifelong Floridian. Honduran honey Iveth Cortez (above) is from Tegucigalpa and likes nothing better thon to curl up with a good book. Mexican-born Nenna Quiroz (left) is the seventh in a family of nine. A fashion major in college, she hos found work as a model. "Sometimes my sense of humor gets me in trouble," she says, "and I hove to smile my woy out of it." We feel confident she mokes that work like a charm.

With three years of law school on her curriculum vitae, Rebecca Ramos (right) seems like a natural candidate for the body politic. Her grandfather was the first Mexican American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and her uncle followed suit. If Rebecca decides to make a run for it, we predict a landslide.

Makeup artist Gerine Caranada (above) has lived in San Diego all her life. She says she loves pink (no kidding), and her name is short for Tangerine (really). A native of Mexico, Katalina Verdin (right) now makes her home in Florida, where she hopes to make a big splash as an actress. Her pet project is training her African gray parrot. A public relations major at a prominent Texas university, Sonia Flores (above, right) waits tables at Hooters while waiting for her modeling career to take off.

*N SYNC *N SANE

LOVE 'EM OR LOATHE 'EM, 'N SYNC IS MAKING THE GIRLS WIG OUT

We've been tryiag to ignore 'N Sync for more thaa two years. (After all, who wants to read about a baach of grown men who dance like cheerleaders and are the antithesis of cool?) But when a 19-year-old girl from the University of Wisconsin bid $1025 on eBay for a piece of Lance's half-eaten French toast, we realized the harmonic quintet has become too huge to disparage. To quote Orlando's first boy band, the Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync is larger than life. For now, anyway.

THE NUMBERS

Days it took 'N Sync to sell a record 1.1 million copies of its latest album, *No Strings Attached*: One.

Number of Eastern Caribbean dollars needed to purchase an 'N Sync postage stamp: One.

Awards received at 1998 Billboard Music Video Awards: Two.

Grammy nomiaatioas ia 2000: Two.

MTV Video Music Award nominatioas for *Tearin' Up My Heart*: Three.

Number of stars Justia Timberlake scored whea he was on *Star Search* (he lost): 3¼.

Number of guys in 'N Sync: Five.

Gays ia the Backstreet Boys: Five.

Number of months it took *'N Sync* to climb into the top 10: Five.

Number of 'N Syac books available oa Amazon.com: 21 and counting.

Rankiag of *'N Sync*, according to MTV's top 25 albums of 1998: 22.

Averoge age of 'N Syncer: 22.8.

Number of fans 'N Syac meet and greet before every show: 30.

Minutes it took bidding on Lance's Freach toast to go from $1 to $800: 30.

Minutes in the pay-per-view special *'N Sync 'N Concert*: 75.

'N Sync items available on eBay: 118.

EBay bid for "Justin Timberlake Abercrombie shirt": $177.50.

Signatures on a petition for an official 'N Sync Day in New Havea, Connecticut: 250.

Number of faas who gathered in Times Square ia March 2000 to watch the band perform oa MTV's *Total Request Live*: 8000.

Square feet of 'N Syac manager Johnny Wright's Orlando home: 32,000.

Copies of *Home for Christmas* sold in one week in December 1998: 153,000.

Copies of *'N Sync* sold in one week in December 1998: 245,000.

Copies of *No Strings Attached* sold in one week in March 2000: 2.4 million.

Copies of *'N Sync* sold, laading tbe group ia the Recording Industry Association of America's diamond club: 10 million.

Gross of 1999 world tour: $44,344,476.

Amount of lawsait filed by 'N Sync's former mentor, Louis Pearlman, leaving the band's name in limbo until both parties settled for aa uadisclosed amoant: $150 million.

THE GUYS

Chris Kirkpatrick—'N Sync's oldest member (28). Nickname: Lucky. Dream girl: Gwen Stefaai. Favorite vacation spot: Cancún.

Justin Timberlake—'N Syac's youagest member (19). Nickaame: Carly. Ride: BMW M Roadster convertible. Favorite shout-oat: "Love, peace, harmony!"

JC Chasez—Nickname: Big Daddy. Ride: Black Jeep Cherokee. Hates: Needles. Collects: Hard Rock Cafe menus.

Joey Fatone—Nickname: Chick magnet. Before 'N Sync: Performed in Universal Studios' *Beetlejuice Graveyard Revue*. Obsessioa: Superman.

Lance Bass—Nickaame: Stealth. Close call: Was asked to be in 'N Syac only after origiaal fifth member couldn't cut it. Ride: Black Toyota 4Runner. Accessory: What Would Jesus Do bracelet.

Ron Jeremy: Alias 'N Syac uses in hotels.

THE QUOTES

"I've been backstage as their opeaing act, and girls out in the audience are lifting their shirts up, aad I'm dying. I'm like, 'Oh my goodness, I'm not believing this. This is bad.'" —BRITNEY SPEARS, ON TOURING WITH 'N SYNC

"We try hard to be differeat. Thea all of a suddea somebody starts following us—you know what I'm saying?" —BACKSTREET BOY NICK CARTER, ON 'N SYNC

"I feel like there's two of me: the public-eye me aad the guy who brushes his teeth twice a day. They're getting along all right now. Sometimes Brash His Teeth doesn't get enoagh attention, but it's worth it." —JUSTIN

"You realize what hard work it is and that it's aot glamoroas. It's like goiag to Disney World, going into the tunnels and seeing Cinderella smokiag a cigarette. The whole magic is gone." —LANCE

"He's an unscrupalous, greedy aad sophisticated businessman who posed as an anselfish, loviag father. While haggiag as and calling us family, he was pickiag our pockets, robbiag as of our future and even endangering our health." —JC ON FORMER 'N SYNC IMPRESARIO LOUIS PEARLMAN

"We're not puppets." —JUSTIN

"It's not just always onstage and big and huge. It's like chilliag at home, being aormal." —JC, ON LIFE BETWEEN TOURS

"I'm not going to say we're perfect, but we don't do cocaine or go, like, 'Hey, let's shoot up.' Bat if we want to go to a club uatil five in the moraing, we don't care who knows about it. In the ead, we aaswer to our families." —LANCE

"I just wanted a piece of them." —KATHY SUMMERS, ON WHY SHE PAID MORE THAN $1000 FOR LANCE'S FRENCH TOAST

"Not moldy, but hard as a rock." —NEW YORK Z100 RADIO STATION SPOKESPERSON, ON THE STATE OF THE FRENCH TOAST

"Don't panic, dear. I just wanted to say you're lookin' damn good!"

Don't Pet The Donkey: An Oral History of Bachelor Parties

THEY SAY THE WILDER the bachelor party, the better the marriage. Right—try telling that to your girlfriend. Will you learn something from having your forehead sandpapered smooth by the crotch of some minx in a G-string? Maybe, but you're sure to forget it by morning. As these tales from anonymous—and mostly untrustworthy—sources make clear, repeating the stories is your reward for surviving the parties intact. Naturally, all the names have been changed.

That Thing Called Love: "Contrary to popular female opinion, the typical party doesn't necessarily involve sex. Once a friend's fiancée asked me, 'I just want to know one thing. Did they touch his thingie?' Happily for her, the answer was no. The girls were far more into each other. It was such a beautiful sight it left one guest in tears. 'I want a girl like that,' he sobbed. He was really messed up. 'I want a girl like that.' Her impact on him was so funny. We couldn't stop laughing."—Noel, 29, record promoter from San Francisco. Cost: $150.
Emotional price: "A brief feeling of longing, but I washed it away at the bar."
Would you do it again? "Sure. You just have to be strong and not let their looks get to you."

A Cautionary Tale About Why You Should Marry a Stripper: "I like to say there's a difference between strippers who will and strippers who won't, and it's usually about 20 years. But what happens when a young one gets married? That's the story I'm going to live off of for the next 40 years. This guy I know was getting married—he's totally Joe Trader. Works on Wall Street and he was marrying this sexy, sweet stripper. I wasn't surprised to see two strippers—friends of the bride's—at Joe's party. But, man, as soon as they got there they fucking kicked his chair out from underneath him, knocked him to his back and took off all his clothes. Their clothes came off next. There was no seduction, no dancing. They just went at it. The fact that they were in a cold basement surrounded by 15 drunken, laughing friends made it hard for him to perform. That's when I realized this party wasn't about the groom.

"They were giving him head. They were trying to fuck

By Christopher Napolitano

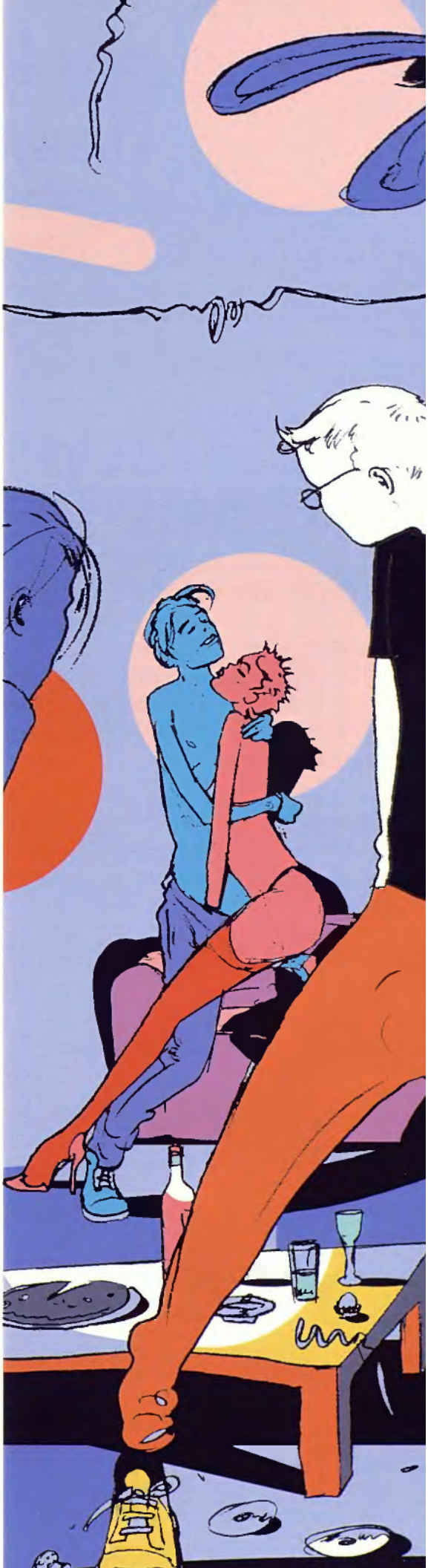


ILLUSTRATION BY ISTVAN BANYAI

him. It was just a shock. A live sex show erupted out of what was supposed to be a good-natured strip party. It soon became apparent that our friend could not consummate the act. So after 20 minutes these two girls got on a pool table—we were downstairs at a restaurant—and they started to perform on each other. Then some people at the party—I can assure you I was not one of them, I'll tell you right off the bat"—it's always the other guy—"some people started groping them. Then they started climbing up onto the pool table and kind of rolling through these two girls. There was a line of guys waiting to roll over and through them and writhe on the table with them for a few minutes. Like a break-dance circle. These girls were whacked out. They had a look of distant longing in their eyes. At a certain point a few guys stayed on the pool table for a long stretch. Then it became too bizarre to watch. That's when I hit my weirdness limit.

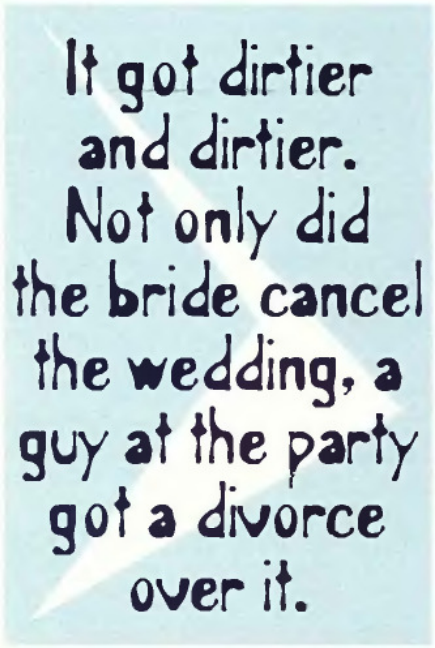
"Eventually these two girls and four guys ended up retiring to the bathroom for a 45-minute drug-and-sex orgy. I heard there were various double and triple penetrations happening. It was incredible. You walked out of there shocked. Guys were walking out unable to speak. Feeling dirty. You know how bachelor parties end drunk and happy? This one ended with everyone sobered by the experience. We walked out into a cold Manhattan street and got into cabs alone."—Ali, 27, software geek from San Francisco.

Cost: $150.

Emotional price: "It rattled me at the time, but now that I look back it's sort of excellent."

Would you do it again? "Nothing can shock me now."

Best Supporting Female: "I've been a best man five times and I've planned five bachelor parties. The best one ever was for a guy who was my best and oldest friend. My favorite restaurant in the LA area is in Santa Monica. Not many people know that there are two private rooms above the main dining room. Brent's was the only bachelor party they ever had or will have. I got these amazing Cuban cigars. We had all this amazing booze. We had a big trade with the restaurant, so the food was, like, caviar, foie gras, lobster—the best of the best. It was the nines. Even with all the favors I cashed in, it cost me thousands of dollars. We had two poker tables set up—new chips, new cards. There was one caveat: Brent's friend Kristen insisted on attending. They'd known each other from college. So we played poker, we're well fed and the entertainment arrives. The thing is, it's a bouncer and one girl. The other girl never shows. How are we going to have a lesbian show? I got one girl—that's not lesbo, that's masturbation. Anyway, we set up a circle. Music comes on, the girl starts doing a show—with lap dances all around. So. There's Kristen. When the stripper gets to Kristen, she starts undoing Kristen's blouse. Kristen doesn't do anything. Then she undoes her bra. Suddenly, she's topless in front of all these guys she's known for years. Being the trouper she is, she goes at it with the other girl. They are kissing each other, fondling and kissing each other's breasts. Kristen is a real-



estate developer from Denver. This is not a bimbo. She turned to Brent and said, 'Is this what you want?' And she just went at it with this girl for a long time. The guys went nuts. Then the stripper turned to Brent. She stripped him to his underwear, covered him head to toe in whipped cream, licked it all off and blew him in front of everyone. We had our own bartender, so he's getting the busboys and chef and the owner—who didn't know this orgiastic stuff would happen. The owner sees Brent covered in whipped cream and come. There wasn't enough money in the world for this girl. Every guy got a serious lap dance—this is no Scores lap dance. This is dry hump. You could feel her pussy, her ass, her tits—she did anything. And Kristen was basically lounging around in nothing but her panties. These worldly LA guys—there was a well-known attorney and some other guys in their 40s and 50s—said to me, 'All these years we've gone to bachelor parties, this is the best ever.' I said you can't go wrong with lesbians, blow jobs, lap dances, poker, booze and cigars. When I threw my next bachelor party I called the manager to let me use the room again, but he said, 'Never, ever again. Not for you, not for anyone. Not for me.'"—Rich, 30, a Los Angeles cigar retailer.

Cost: "Must have cost me $3500."

Emotional price: "It was a lift. A huge lift."

Would you do it again? "If I still had that kind of money, I would."

Highest Body Count: "These two girls did the strip thing. Then they did each other and it got dirtier and dirtier. It was at a house in the Hollywood Hills. They started doing guys in the bathroom and then they did the groom big-time. Somehow the bride found out. The party was a week before the wedding. Not only did she cancel the wedding, but one of the other guys at the party ended up getting a divorce over it. It was the bachelor party from hell. The sex show turned out to be so wild that guys started talking. They were just blabbing about it afterward: 'You won't believe what happened.' No one realized what was at stake."—Steve, 45, PR guy in Los Angeles.

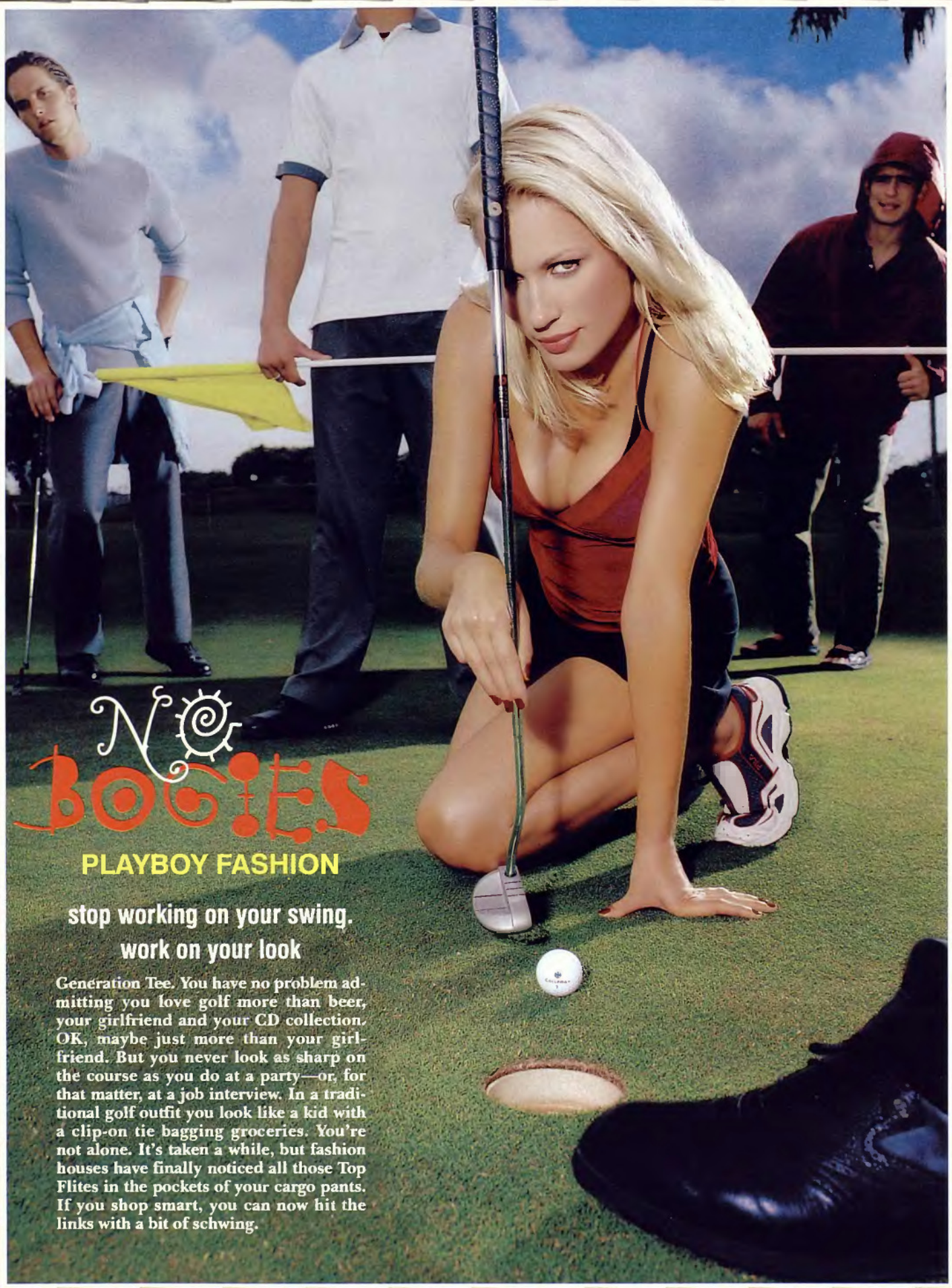
Cost: "Can't remember."

Emotional price: "I don't want to remember."

Would you do it again? "Did it turn me off bachelor parties? No."

When Bad Things Go Good: "A woman I knew who lived outside Boston had a horrible husband who had a friend who was going to get married. Though Michelle's marriage was falling apart, her husband insisted she hold a party for the bride and the girls while he held the bachelor party for his friend. The bride and her mom and family and friends show up at Michelle's house. They're critical. 'You don't have a dipper? What do you put your dip in?' Very unpleasant. They sit around and talk and the bride reveals she is more sexually accomplished than the groom. Things he couldn't or wouldn't do or had never done. Then the conversation turns to, 'I wish we knew where the guys were.' Michelle, who hates them all at this point, says, 'I know!' She gives them the address. She stays home to clean up. The procession of cars leaves. Minutes later, they return. Bride-to-be is crying. She needs help getting out of the car. Apparently they went to the place. There was noise coming out of the house. There was the smell of beer, loud music and it was dark. They walk in and *voilà!* On a table there's a hooker in an orange wig and the groom is fucking her as everyone else is clapping rhythmically! As the bride sees her sexually inexperienced groom fucking, their eyes meet and, *woosh!* The groom throws up. So the ladies packed it up and returned to Michelle's and the wedding took place

(continued on page 146)



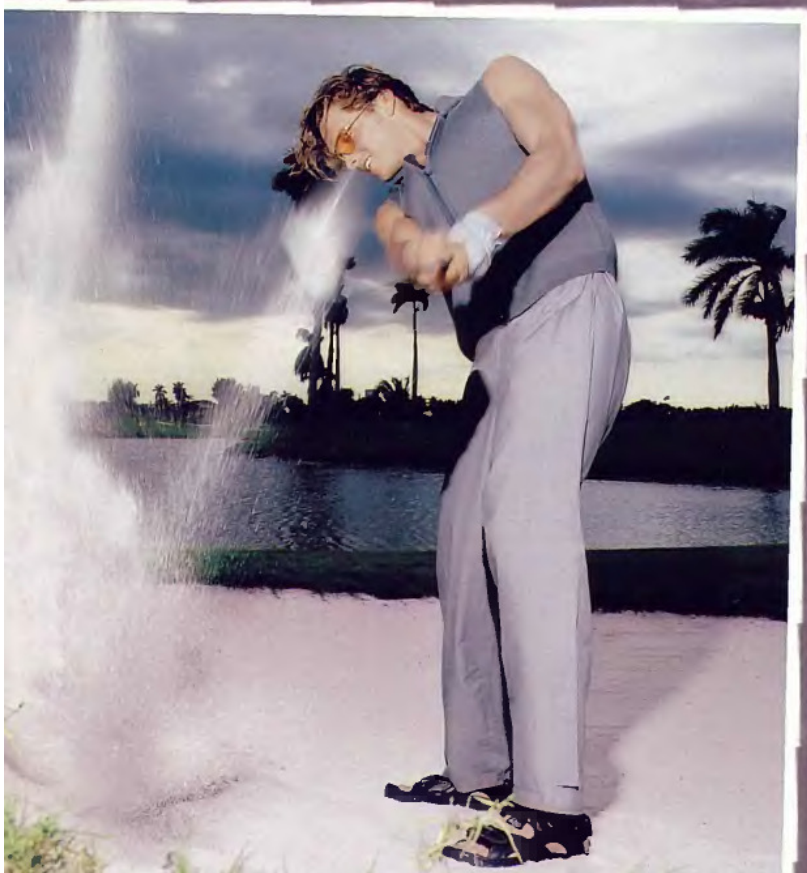
PLAYBOY FASHION

stop working on your swing. work on your look

Generation Tee. You have no problem admitting you love golf more than beer, your girlfriend and your CD collection. OK, maybe just more than your girlfriend. But you never look as sharp on the course as you do at a party—or, for that matter, at a job interview. In a traditional golf outfit you look like a kid with a clip-on tie bagging groceries. You're not alone. It's taken a while, but fashion houses have finally noticed all those Top Flites in the pockets of your cargo pants. If you shop smart, you can now hit the links with a bit of schwing.

You could complain about a bad lie, but dressed like this, you'll probably be too busy with a good lay. Eric is trying for a birdie in a sweater and nylon pants by Hugo Boss Golf. His visor is by Fila; the kicks are by Johnston & Murphy. You think spikes are useless in the real world? Try climbing trees in leather soles.

Scorecard ready? From left to right, Antonios is wearing a Joseph Abboud sweater and GA Golf pants (GA stands for Giorgio Armani). Sigthor has on pants by Nautica Competition and a Tommy Hilfiger shirt. Eric squats in pants by GA Golf. The shirt is by Lacoste, the sweater is by Joseph Abboud. Jeff is outfitted in Polo Golf. Christine is wearing a look of concentration. Is that a water hazard or a passing wakeboarder? Antonios makes waves in a sleeveless sweater by Lacoste and nylon pants by Prada Sport. In back, Eric is in a Lacoste polo and Nautica Competition pants. His Bobby Jones cotton crewneck serves as a cape. Sigthor is sitting in muddy Fila pants and a shirt by Bobby Jones. His shoes are by Nike and the hat is by Polo Sport. Jeff is wearing a white Lacoste polo under a striped Nautica shirt. His pants are by GA Golf.



Fashion gets o grip: The golf explosion is impossible to ignore. Flags ore everywhere. Zandl Group, a market research firm, says golf tops o list of sports that are "getting cooler" omong respondents in their 20s. In the study, golf—the nine-stroke leoder at 76 percent—beot out mountain biking (67 percent) and snowboarding (58 percent). Considering the most populor sport among morketers is separating a 25-yeor-old from his money, that's o big number. Above left, tot-friendly sleeveless V-necks lead o porode of white shirts. From left to right, Sigthor is wearing a wind shirt by Hugo Boss Golf, while Eric is buttoned up in o shirt by the Gop. That's o Bobby Jones tank top on Christine, a GA Golf polo shirt ond sunglasses on Jeff and o Tommy Hilfiger sleeveless sweater on Antonios. Fashion is linked to music these days, and musicians, it seems, con't do without golf. Punk bond NOFX even likes to organize tours at locotions near golf courses. So don't be surprised to look up ot your next show and find the lead singer in this zip-front vest by GA Golf (left). The nylon pants are by Huga Boss Golf, sandals are by Bite ond sunglasses are by Noutica. The group shot opposite reflects the sport's fresher fairways. Clockwise from the top, Antonios lozes on a golf bog by Prada. He's weoring a polo by Nike and trousers by Burberry Golf. A Bobby Jones shirt and silver shorts by Fila adorn Christine. Sigthor has on a polo and pants by GA Golf ond sunglasses by Giorgio Armani. Jeff is in a sweater and trousers by Hugo Boss Golf. A cotton tank by Nautica livens up Eric's look, along with trousers by Polo Golf.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TROY WORD

PHOTOGRAPHED AT INTERNATIONAL LINKS MIAMI—MELREESE GOLF COURSE

FASHION BY JOSEPH DE ACETIS/TRILISE
PROPS BY EYAL BARUCH/TRILISE

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JOSHUA BARRET FOR SHU VERMURA/ARTISTS

She's Daring,

She's Modern,

She's an

Exhibitionist.

We're Very Happy

DIGITAL *Diaries*

Sex is a huge part of my life," says Natacha Merritt. And she's not one to hide her diary under the bed. The sex-fueled photos in Natacha's *Digital Diaries* (Taschen) are a coming-out party for the 22-year-old. As Natacha told us, "There are so many different ways to get aroused. And I think it's really good to document your sex life, whether or not you want to show it to the world. People should document their lives—especially what interests them most, which is usually sex and love and all the things that are attached to that stuff." We've got a crush on Natacha. And we wouldn't mind making some art with her.

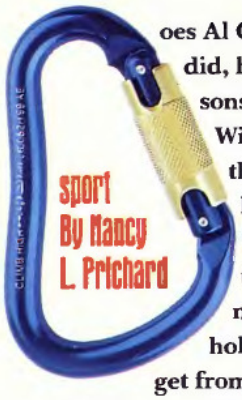
"Taking images is a way to replace love, exhibit love—a reason to explore, a safe way to experiment."

—Natacha Merritt

"Our slogan is—'Hot and at your door in 30 minutes.'"

STILL ROCKIN'

rock climbing—gear, guides and places to go



sport
By Nancy L. Prichard

oes Al Gore rock climb? If he did, he wouldn't need lessons in being an alpha male. With climbing, it goes with the territory. Climbers have a certain confidence. A feral grace that's developed as you move fluidly from hold to hold. A viselike grip you get from clinging to small crevices. And less tangible, but unmistakable, is what climbers call the North Wall look, a cast to one's eyes that says, Don't mess with me, I've been there and I'm back. But climbing is different from other risk sports. There are no restrictions. No one to check your rating, go over your gear or question your qualifications. The stone is a cruel mirror—if you don't have what it takes, it lets you know.

A bonus of climbing is the spectacular view you get from a cliff hundreds of feet high. Many of the classic climbing areas are situated in national parks—wilderness reserves selected for their awesome beauty. The equipment has gotten remarkably user-friendly—harnesses don't come untied, ropes don't break and shoes stick to the rock like glue—making the sport accessible to anyone with the drive to rise above the crowd.

That's *(continued on page 172)*

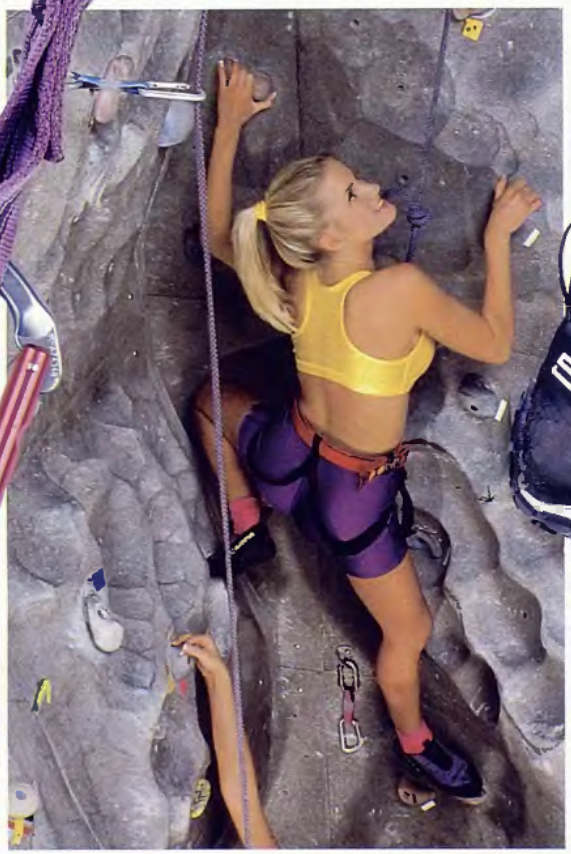
Left: Even at 3000 feet you'll feel safe clipping into a rock face with Climb High's Omega locking Carabiner 4.0 ($8). Below left: Chalk bags, in addition to holding the white powder that helps you get a grip, reflect your personal style. Pictured are two models that say extreme: Wild Things' skull and crossbones ($17) and Black Diamond's hot peppers (about $18). Below: Metolius Products' Mammut Galaxy climbing rope is strong and durable but light enough to bring on long climbs ($204 for 230 feet).

Across the top: Black Diamond's 18mm nylon Daisy Chain has 13 loops for climbers to attach to pitons or ascenders when a rock cannot be free-climbed. The end loops can also be attached to a harness ($15). Above: Ideal for mountaineering and skiing, Climb High's Julbo Dolomite blue glacier sunglasses, which can be fitted with prescription lenses, screen out 100 percent of the sun's harmful rays. The maldable temples provide a comfortable fit and removable vented side shields reduce glare ($80).

Above: Black Diamond's Stone Pack features a back panel and shoulder straps made of nylon mesh, which wicks moisture away from skin. At 2.5 pounds, the pack won't add much weight to your load ($100). Right: Metalius' Four Cam, designed for cracks one inch and larger, is ideally suited for the cliffs of Yosemite and Eldorado Canyon ($54 to $60, depending on size).

We could write o book obout the functionality of rock climbing hordwore. Suffice it to soy, it's oll designed to keep you from falling. Pictured here, on Metolius' Multiloop Geor Sling ($24), ore beloy devices (which guide your rope during o climb), ond o selection of corobiners, quick draws, stoppers ond hexes. Top monufocturers include Climb High, Metolius, Black Diamond ond Petzel. Prices range from $16 for o belay device to more than $60 for o cam. Serious climbers carry plenty of eoch.

Below: December 1998 Playmote Nicole Dahm climbs the 100-foot woll ot Chicogo's Lake Shore Athletic Club in Illinois Center. The wall is open to nonmembers on Saturday evenings from 5 P.M. till 7:45 P.M. for $32, including gear ond instruction. No guarantees Nicole will be there.



Above: Tom Cruise wears o poir of Five Ten Ascent multipurpose climbing shoes in this summer's *Mission Impossible II*. These verticol-mileage shoes reportedly hove the stickiest rubber soles in the industry. The treoded heels provide troction when wolking ond ore cushioned to protect your feet during dismounts on hard surfoces ($143). Right: Climb High's Grivel Tibet Summer Cop helmet hos o diol system that provides the optimum fit ($80). Below: Moke like the god of thunder with Climb High's Grivel Thor hammer. Its head is made of nickel chromoly steel and the handle is equipped with o pick for removing pitons from rock foces ($74).

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 170.

welcome
to her flock

Neferteri: ONE GREAT SHEPHERD

NEFERTERI SHEPHERD claims she was born to model, and she has the moniker to confirm it. The 19-year-old's first name is Egyptian for "here comes the beautiful one," a fitting description for this looker. Newlywed Neferteri (her friends call her Nef) studies business in college and lives in Berkeley, California. "I basically want to be my own boss—I don't want to work for anyone else," says Nef. An avid reader, she has what it takes to go to the head of the class, but Nef's been chasing her true calling for as long as she can remember.

"Modeling is hard work, but I like the result when I get to see the pictures," says Nef. "I'm an ambitious person. When I want something, I put 150 percent into achieving it." Even

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNY FREYTAG

though her love affair with the camera began at an early age, Nef worries about young girls hungry to strike a pose. "I believe girls shouldn't model until they are at least 17 years old. People cart these little kids all over the world and they become drug addicts or anorexic. I'm glad I didn't start out when I was younger, because I can look at everything from a different perspective and not let anyone take advantage of me."

Now that's she's older and wiser, does Nef feel confident about posing in the buff? "I went to a nude beach when I was 16 and didn't feel comfortable with it," she says. "Now, after posing for PLAYBOY, my confidence has been boosted [*laughs*]. I look at nudity as art, depending on how it's presented. I never thought my body was nice until I started dancing and looking at other people's bodies. My breasts are natural—it's all me."

Nef is fortunate to have a husband and family who support her newfound freedom of expression. "I just got married last December, and my husband is

Nef knows whot she likes in o man. "He needs to know whot he wonts out of life ond how he plons to get it," she soys. "I olso love o man who respects his mother and knows how to treot me right. I'm turned off by rudeness, orrogance ond not being punctual."

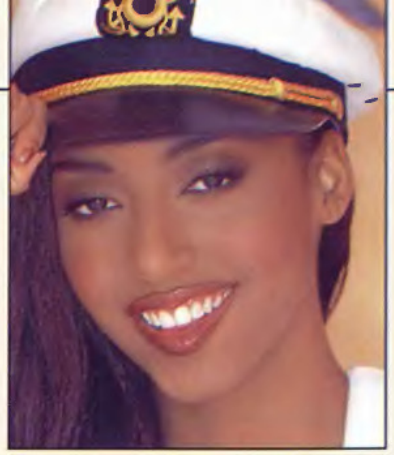
excited about my being in PLAYBOY," she says. "At first, he didn't want me to do it, but my mom really wanted me to go for it." Nef, who was born in New Orleans but raised in California, has a family reunion in Mississippi this month where she can expect to meet previously unknown relatives, now that word is out that there's a Playmate in the family. "It's going to be out in the cut—we're supposed to bring tents and camp out," she says. The cut? "You know, in the woods, somewhere far out."

In her free time, Nef is a smooth operator. "I love Sade and Brian McKnight," she reveals. "I mostly enjoy rap and hip-hop. I used to listen to a lot of alternative rock music when I was younger. I'm not sure why—it was kind of weird. I love to dance—it relaxes the body and refreshes the soul."

Nef lists her mother and Iman as two important role models. "I admire my mom a lot," she says. "She raised me by herself—we're very close. As for Iman, I like her because she's a smart businesswoman. She models and acts, plus has a family and her own cosmetics company." Has Nef caught the acting bug yet? "I've thought about being on a soap opera or in a comedy–action movie, like *Lethal Weapon*." That's a risky business for a model. Would she do her own stunts? "Depends on the stunt. Leaping off a building or being lit on fire would be too much. If I have to be lit on fire, I need a double." We'd like to keep Nef around, so this is music to our ears, and she insists she would never take her good fortune for granted. "When I wake up, I thank God for giving me another day of life. I try to make the most out of every day—you never know if it will be your last."

What tempts Nef's taste buds? "I love Italian food. I like cooking lasagna, spaghetti and stuffed shells. I like Cuban, Thai and seafood, too. I don't eat a lot of meat or like Chinese that much—sometimes you get lucky with it and sometimes it's nasty."

MISS JULY
PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH



PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Nefertari Shepherd

BUST: 34C WAIST: 23 HIPS: 35

HEIGHT: 5'9" WEIGHT: 118

BIRTH DATE: 09.09.80 BIRTHPLACE: New Orleans, LA

AMBITIONS: To become a successful real estate investor & pursue my acting & modeling career.

TURN-ONS: Genuinely kind, loyal and honest people who know what they want out of life.

TURNOFFS: Complaining, unappreciative people who are unhappy with their lives and want you to be unhappy too.

I WISH I HAD: The resources to stop violence, especially among America's youth.

MY MOTTO: Never let others hold you back from what you want out of life.

FAVORITE WAYS TO KILL TIME: Bubble baths, reading and taking naps.

High School Grad "98"

Me & My Best Friend Richelle

I model for Hawaiian Tropic

PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

The gig was over and the jazz club was almost deserted. The grizzled old tenor sax man was relaxing, having a drink, when a gorgeous redhead came through the door. She walked over to the musician, looked deeply into his eyes and said, "I heard you play earlier tonight, but after I left I just had to come back and tell you that you touched my soul. Every note you played reached me in a personal and emotional way that I haven't felt in years. I want," she purred, "to take you home with me, cook for you, pamper you and make love to you until we're both exhausted."

The musician met her gaze, then asked, "Did you catch the first or the second set?"

PLAYBOY CLASSIC: An elderly man was upset because he had lost his favorite hat. Instead of buying a new one, he decided he would go to church and swipe one out of the vestibule. As he came in the door an usher led him to a pew, where he had to sit and listen to an entire sermon on the Ten Commandments.

After church, the man met the preacher in the vestibule doorway, shook his hand vigorously and told him, "I want to thank you for saving my soul today. I came to church to steal a hat, but after hearing your sermon on the Ten Commandments, I decided against it."

"You mean the commandment 'Thou shalt not steal' changed your mind?"

"No, the one about adultery," the old guy replied. "As soon as you said that, I remembered where I left my hat."

After searching the display counter, a woman asked the pharmacist if he sold extra-large condoms. "Yes, we do," he replied. "Would you like to buy some?"

"No," she said. "But do you mind if I wait around here until someone does?"

A big-game hunter went on safari with his wife and his mother-in-law. One morning, while still deep in the jungle, the hunter's wife awakened to find her mother gone. She woke her husband and they both set off in search of the old woman.

In a clearing not far from the camp, they came upon a chilling sight: the mother-in-law standing face-to-face with a ferocious lion. "What are we going to do?!" the horrified wife asked.

"Nothing," her husband replied. "The lion got himself into this mess. Let him get himself out of it."

A salesman was testifying in his divorce trial. "Please describe the incident that first caused you to entertain suspicions about your wife's fidelity," his attorney instructed.

"Well, I'm on the road all week," the man testified. "So naturally, when I am home, I'm particularly attentive to the wife. One Sunday morning," he continued, "we were in the middle of our lovemaking when the old lady in the apartment next door pounded on the wall and yelled, 'Can't you at least stop all that racket on the weekends?'"

E-JOKE OF THE MONTH: The buzz in pharmaceutical circles is that a new product called Ginkgo Viagra will soon be on the market. It's designed to help you remember what the fuck you're doing.

A young man bought his blonde wife a cell phone for their first wedding anniversary. She was thrilled.

The next day at the mall, her phone rang. "Hi, hon," her husband said, "how do you like your new phone?"

"I just love it!" she replied. "But there's one thing I don't understand."

"What's that, baby?"

"How on earth," she asked, "did you know I was at Wal-Mart?"

THIS MONTH'S MOST FREQUENT SUBMISSION: Why was Bill Clinton so reluctant to deal with the fate of Elián González? Because the last time he made a decision about where to put a Cuban he was impeached.

LeRoy Neiman

Two old-timers spent most of their time playing cards, telling jokes and making bets. One said, "I bet you mine is longer soft than yours is hard. A thousand bucks."

"How can that be?" the other replied. "If you know anything at all about biology, you wouldn't make a bet like that."

"I called for a bet, not a lecture," the first guy said. "Mine is longer soft than yours is hard. A thousand dollars, yes or no?"

"OK, OK, I'll take the bet. How long is yours soft?"

"Eleven years."

Send your jokes on postcards to Party Jokes Editor, PLAYBOY, *680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611, or by e-mail to jokes@playboy.com. $100 will be paid to the contributor whose submission is selected. Sorry, jokes cannot be returned.*

"What say we form a chat room on the web?"

one guy. 4 ex-girlfriends. LOTS OF WINE

By Scott Bindley

A BATTERED ROMEO INVITED FOUR EXES FOR DRINKS AND ASKED, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?" NOW THAT HE KNOWS, WILL HE BE A BETTER BOYFRIEND . . . OR JUST KILL HIMSELF?

I sat in my kitchen staring at the bottle of aspirin, the glass of water and the mug of coffee, but I could not bring myself to ingest any of them. I flipped on the TV, thinking the final round of the Masters could divert my attention from the pounding in my head. One Greg Norman bogey later, I turned it off. This was a milestone—I was too hungover to watch golf on TV. Across the way on the counter sat a tape recorder and several empty wine bottles. I counted them. There were eight.

I'm 33 and single. I mean really single. The last time I used the word girlfriend was in the Eighties. During the past decade I have had scores of minirelationships, but none graduated into anything approaching serious. My only long-termer was in college, when I dated a gal for three years. The number two relationship on the list lasted about four months. I believe that relationships can be gauged by how far up the Big Event Ladder they climb. The upper rungs consist of things like living together and having exploratory discussions about marriage or children. Couples in this realm are no longer just dating—they've become a unit. At this point, she finally accepts that he probably won't get any taller, and he resigns himself to the fact that, at the end of the day, he was simply fooled by the cunning fiction that is the Wonderbra.

In the past decade I have participated in none of these relationships. My climbs up the Big Event Ladder reached only as high as a smattering of weekend getaways and meeting a couple of parents. Discussions of marriage? Never. Kids? Even less. To sum up, I have never in my life purchased jewelry of any kind for a girl I was dating. I've given them things like *Far Side* calendars and gift certificates to sporting goods stores. And, no, I am not one of

(continued on page 162)

ILLUSTRATION BY JANET WOOLLEY

blood, guts & Staple Guns

Extreme Wrestling would like your attention

The WWF and WCW are getting bitch-slapped at their own game. The hottest thing in the ring right now is Extreme Championship Wrestling, the scrappy third-place federation that's reinvented professional wrestling—for grown-ups. Gone are the cartoonish characters invented to become kids' action figures at Toys R Us. In their place is the most realistic fake mayhem in the squared circle. You want violence? ECW goes far the old ultraviolence—with the likes of staple guns, barbed wire, forks, pizza slicers, flaming tables and exploding land mines (yes, land mines—thankfully, Princess Di didn't live to see this). You want blood? ECW wrestlers hit more gushers than Texaco. You want antiheroes? The foulmouthed good guy was invented by the ECW, only to be copied by the other federations. The loyal ECW fans chant "Holy shit" at good moves and "you fucked up" at bad ones. They've also been heard to yell "Simon Diamond sucks dick" to make a point with one ECW star. It's no surprise that ECW has a hard-core fan base—it emphasizes mayhem over soap opera story lines. If the rumors about a WWF partnership with CBS are true, ECW is ready to take over WWF's prized slots on USA Network, leaving behind its weekly show on the Nashville Network. If not, look for the WWF and WCW to continue to poach ECW's best talent and gimmicks.

"Enjoy it while you can—they've just invented bloomers."

Absolute Vegas

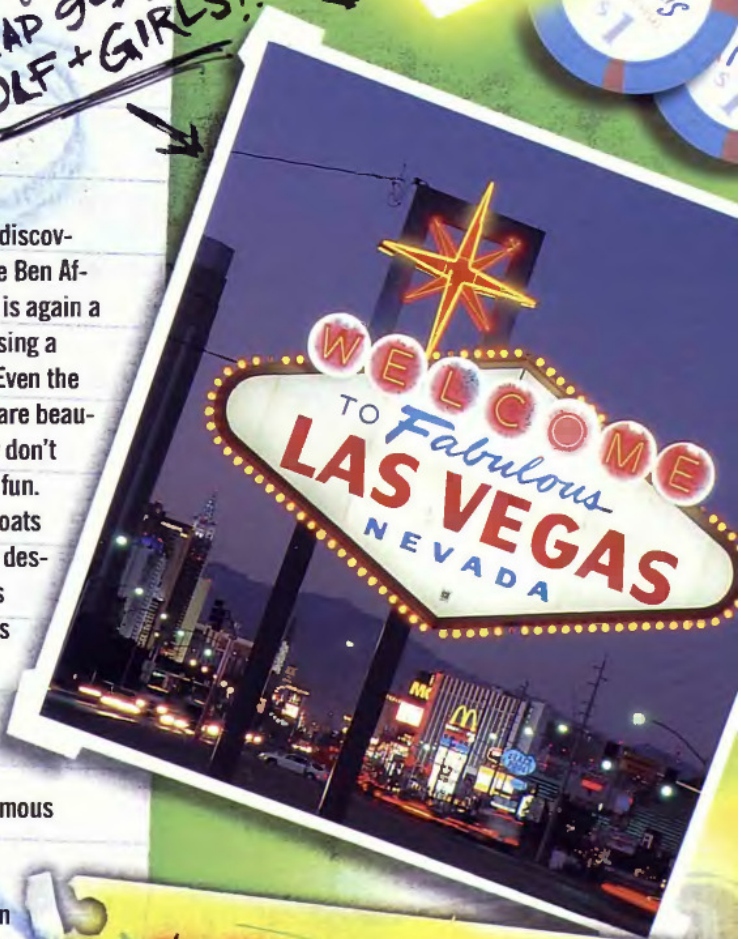
Las Vegas grew famous as the ultimate guy's town—an entire city dedicated to the excesses that men like best. There was free booze, legal gambling, endless buffets of inexpensive guy food, even golf. And there were plenty of girls. Cigarette girls. Showgirls. Call girls. Strippers. Waitresses. All sorts of girls.

* free Booze, legal gambling, CHEAP guy food- GOLF + GIRLS!!

Now history is repeating itself. Everybody's favorite Sin City has rediscovered its roots. Frank and Dean—R.I.P. Their spirit lives on in guys like Ben Affleck, Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt and Trey Parker—because Vegas is again a guy's town, the place to let loose. You can weave down the street nursing a three-foot daiquiri. Street vendors hand out ads for escort services. Even the malls are geared toward guys. Better yet, everywhere you look there are beautiful women, the type of women who either have a personal trainer or don't need one. They come to Vegas for the same reason men do—to have fun.

When Vegas first faced competition from Atlantic City, seedy riverboats on the Mississippi and Indian casinos, it reinvented itself as a family destination where aging boomers could take the kids to Circus Circus. As those boomers got richer, Las Vegas wooed them with luxurious hotels like the Bellagio and the Four Seasons, first-class spas and a lineup of restaurants that reads like a Zagat's all-star team.

Now Vegas uses its marketing smarts to make sure its newest target audience—hip young men who know how to have a good time—is happy. In today's Vegas, Bens, Brads, Leos and their less famous counterparts rule the town. They spend late nights at new clubs that rival anything in Los Angeles or New York. They play new-generation games of chance made for the Nintendo-inclined. They have their own hotels and casinos where they won't end up playing blackjack next to some Homer who splits 10s and wears a souvenir T-shirt. This new Vegas hasn't been lost on young women, either. It has become, quite simply, the ultimate party town for the young and restless.



by robert b desalvo + Stephen randall
additional research by scott anderson, barry leshtz, larry elmsted + amy schmidt

"VEGAS IS A GUY'S TOWN"...

$$$

THE HIPPEST Places to STAY

HARD ROCK The hotel-casino that has redefined Vegas is a high-energy place with pulsating rock music, cases of rock memorabilia and Sex Pistols slot machines. The jumbo television in the sports book plays Letterman and Conan instead of the numbing ESPN shown in regular casinos. Hungry? Try the panuchos at the Pink Taco restaurant. If you look under 30, be prepared to show your ID. The Hard Rock draws such a young crowd it has to be hypervigilant.

RIO Like the Hard Rock, the Rio is off the Strip in a world of its own. To compensate for its location, the Rio has its own mall (Masquerade Village, an endless carnival with floats, and performers hanging from the ceiling), two buffets and good restaurants. There's a great pool complex, and every room is a suite.

MANDALAY BAY The energetic home of the House of Blues restaurant and club (one floor of the hotel even has House of Blues–themed rooms). Aureole, the hotel's signature restaurant, has an Adam Tihany–designed four-story wine tower—wine stewards strap on harnesses and are hoisted up to fetch your wine. The Four Seasons (the only five-diamond hotel in Vegas) is actually a hotel within Mandalay Bay, though it has its own entrance. The complex is at the south end of the Strip, so the rooms have actual views, and it's connected by an elevated tram that takes you to the Luxor and Excalibur.

Bellagio The first of the truly upscale hotels in Vegas is wildly overdone by some standards but tasteful compared with local Vegas culture. For now, it houses Steve Wynn's art collection. The buffet is good, but be prepared to hear Andrea Bocelli piped into every corner of the resort. It's also expensive, the place to make the statement: "Hey, I have money and I'm not afraid to spend it."

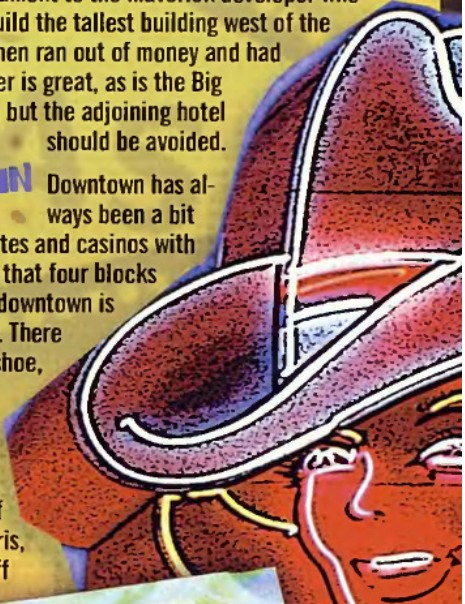
the LAMEST Places to STAY

EXCALIBUR Tacky, even by Vegas standards. Its claims to fame are (1) the world's largest hotel parking lot (trams patrol the nether reaches to bring you to the hotel) and (2) the WCW-themed restaurant (you want slaw with that pile driver?).

CIRCUS CIRCUS The budget version of Excalibur. Need we say more?

STRATOSPHERE A weird monument to the maverick developer who wanted to build the tallest building west of the Mississippi (with a roller coaster on top), then ran out of money and had to curb even wilder plans. The roller coaster is great, as is the Big Shot (sort of a bungee jump at 1000 feet), but the adjoining hotel should be avoided.

ANYPLACE DOWNTOWN Downtown has always been a bit low-rent, thanks to hotels with cheap rates and casinos with low minimums (25 cent craps, penny slots). Now that four blocks of Fremont Street are canopied with a domed light show, downtown is DK, but it still pales compared with the lights on the Strip. There are a few classic Vegas casinos, including Binion's Horseshoe, home of both the World Series of Poker and the town's most celebrated murder (Binion scion Ted was found dead; his accused murderer was caught digging up Ted's stash of silver buried in the desert), and the Las Vegas Club. Most of the "casinos" are just big rooms with lots of slot machines. La Bayou offers 26 flavors of frozen daiquiris, and Mermaids takes your picture for free. You're better off on the Strip.



The City of FIGHTS

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF FIGHTS IN VEGAS.

One is a big deal—professional boxing that usually takes place at one of the big hotels, like MGM Grand or Mandalay Bay. With the exception of New Year's Eve, no event electrifies the city more—there are extra cops on the street (remember, Tupac Shakur was murdered driving home from a Mike Tyson bout), hotel reservations are tougher to get and many of the big showrooms cancel their early show and postpone their late show until the fight is over. That's not merely because fights are a big draw; it's also because boxing is the celebrity flavor of the month. All the big names from LA and New York fly in. None of the Vegas headliners wants to miss out on the party, so they simply skip their first show and hang out with their peers. Then there are those other fights. Guys on the prowl, fueled by equal amounts of liquor and testosterone, can get rowdy. Every casino has a fistfight or two a day, and the older, tackier casinos seem to have more. Not to worry—at the first hint of violence, every casino employee, from bartender to pit boss, is in on the act, and fights never last more than one round. Street fights are a different matter. It takes cops longer to respond, so a street brawl can go the distance. And testosterone isn't always to blame. We saw one fight outside the MGM Grand between two women, which naturally drew a large crowd. Did the onlookers try to break up the catfight? Nope—this is Vegas. They simply chanted in unison, "Jerry, Jerry, Jerry."

BEST PLACE TO MEET THE GIRL OF YOUR ★DREAMS★★★

POOLSIDE AT THE HARD ROCK

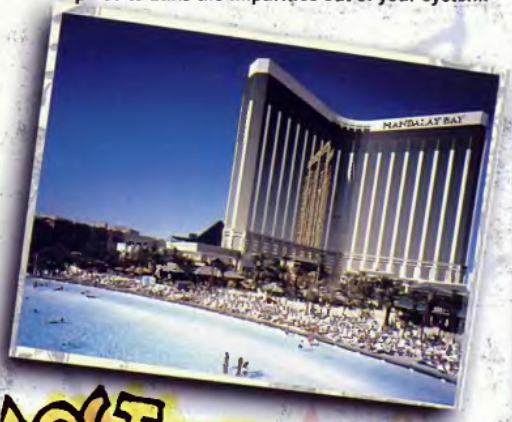
Best PLACE TO MEET THE GIRL OF YOUR DREAMS (and not have to remember her name) CRAZY HORSE too

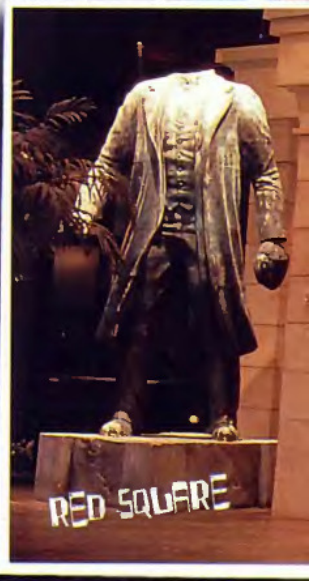
BEST PLACES to GET wet

HARD ROCK HOTEL:

MTV televised *The Grind* from the original pool complex, and it's only gotten better since, with sandy beaches, private cabanas and a lazy "river" connecting the two pools. There's underwater music, swim-up gambling and, of course, beautiful women in thongs. Why else would they have a live bikini cam at hardrockhotel.com?

MANDALAY BAY: Three pools, sandy beaches, nine private bungalows, 16 cabanas with wet bars and TVs, a lazy river ride and a wave machine in the big pool that generates swells up to six feet. Alas, no bikini cam—but it's not for lack of subject matter. A great place to bake the impurities out of your system.





MOST ADDICTIVE ... MACHINE

THE ODYSSEY

The Odyssey is a vivid, multimedia-enriched gaming breakthrough (compared with the beeping pixilated video machines in many casinos) that lets the player switch between various slot games, poker and Top Hat blackjack. More habit-forming than crack, Top Hat gives you a chance to double the money you just won by choosing a high/low card. Pick the right one? You can keep doubling to infinity, but if you lose one hand, you lose the loot. Since it plays and looks like a CD-ROM game, it is difficult to stop plunking quarters into an Odyssey.

TOPLESS BARS XXX VS. XXX TOTAL NUDE CLUBS

WE HAVE A ★★★ WINNER!

Any time one guy or a group of guys gets in a cab in Vegas, the driver is going to ask (in the elegant vernacular of the cabbie), "So, you want to see some titty?" Since this is Vegas, the answer is invariably yes. Here's an insider's tip: Vegas topless bars are cooler than totally nude clubs. Surprised? Don't be. Topless clubs get the prettiest, most aggressive girls (and when we say aggressive, we mean actual touching). And topless bars are allowed to serve liquor. Forget the nude clubs: There's no booze and our insider (who talks surprisingly like a cabbie) says, "Most of those girls are just hookers who got tired of smelling exhaust fumes and wanted to get in off the street." The best topless clubs: Crazy Horse Too, Cheetah's, Olympic Garden and Club Paradise. If topless isn't good enough for you, try Déjà Vu or Lil' Darlings. The big question running through every guy's mind during a lap dance is, How can I get this girl to come home with me? Usually, you can't—most clubs discourage their girls from "entertaining clients." No club owner wants to lose his license on a prostitution rap. Does sex happen on the side? Sure. But it's not the smartest move. Some girls will gladly take your $300 and agree to meet you back at the hotel when their shift is over. Just don't expect them to show up. You're not going to see hookers prowling the casinos, bars or streets of Vegas. In what amounts to a tacit understanding between the police and the call girls, business is conducted on an out-call basis. Phone numbers for escort and massage services are everywhere, from the Yellow Pages to fliers passed out on the street. If you're looking for paid companionship, that's your best bet. If you're looking for unpaid companionship, you'll find it the same way you do back home. Hit the clubs and be prepared to buy someone a drink. Isn't that why everyone goes to clubs?

OOOH, CHEETAH'S!

HOW CAN I GET THIS GIRL TO COME HOME WITH ME?

THE New NIGHTLIFE

Baby's The Hard Rock Hotel's subterranean groove pit is mostly a hang-out for nubile under-30 flesh. Eye candy abounds in the form of luscious, vinyl-clad waitresses, and the drinks from the back bar will knock you to the floor.

Drink & Eat Too A huge, cigar-friendly, off-the-Strip hot spot with six mod-inspired party rooms, three theme bars and three dance floors. If Baby's (a few blocks down the street) is too crowded, come here and check out the leftovers.

Rumjungle Window waterfalls, more than 100 varieties of rum and sexy trapeze artists suspended from the ceiling await you at Mandalay Bay's Latin-flavored techno club. The atmosphere screams "get rowdy," and the melting pot of ready-for-action locals and tourists keeps the party kicking until the wee hours of the morning.

Red Square Tired of all the rum and thunder at Rumjungle? Walk next door to this out-there interpretation of postrevolutionary Russia. Comrades are offered sable coats and mink caps before they enter a 26-foot-tall walk-in vodka freezer for some serious taste testing. It's the ideal place to chill out—part of the bar is made of ice, to keep your cocktails cool.

RA A formidable line of night crawlers assembles at the Luxor's futuristic Egyptian-themed nightclub. Huge Ra statues on the bars oversee a largely under-30 crowd shaking their rumps to Seventies, hip-hop and house grooves from the resident DJ.

C2K The overblown, three-level hard-core techno club in the Venetian attracts the aging rave brats of the early Nineties who couldn't part with their glow sticks, pacifiers or affinity for dancing in steel cages. It's a great space for a supersize buffet when the club falters in a few years.

Studio 54 If you expect the anything-goes decadence of its NYC progenitor, skip this three-level, industrial-looking copycat at the MGM Grand. Guys seeking friendly clubaholics should ease on down the road.

Foundation Room This elitist lounge for House of Blues Foundation members and their guests is the coolest nightspot you'll never get into (membership fees will set you back $2000 a year). On the 43rd floor of Mandalay Bay, the Foundation Room is probably the only place in Vegas to see authentic multicultural artwork instead of the casinos' sometimes-cheesy replicas.

3 BAD THINGS MOST LIKELY TO HAPPEN TO YOU:

1. You'll lose money. You will. That's a given.
2. You won't have a minibar in your room.
3. You'll say yes when someone offers you a free shrimp cocktail. It's the most potentially lethal dish known to man.

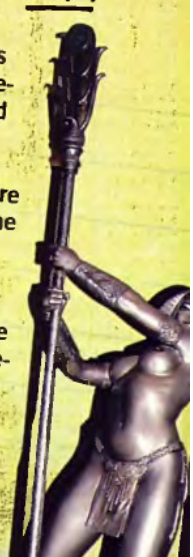
things to do when you are broke!!

BECOME A MALL RAT. Unlike those in the civilized world, Vegas malls are guy-friendly, if not designed with guys in mind. Check out clothes, gadgets and sports stuff (plus lots of free entertainment, especially if you like talking statues) at places like Caesars Forum Shops, the Venetian's Grand Canal Shoppes, the Fashion Show Mall, Via Bellagio and the about-to-open Aladdin's Desert Passage.

TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE. Almost all of Vegas is a zoo. But within the big zoo are little zoos—with animals. Lions, tigers and dolphins can be seen at the Mirage for $10. The MGM Grand has lions enclosed in a habitat you can actually walk into, and the Flamingo has plenty of the birds the hotel was named after.

EXPERIENCE CULTURE SHOCK. Get into the spirit of Vegas at the Casino Legends Hall of Fame at the Tropicana (featuring a gallery of gangsters, showgirls, fires and implosions), the Elvis-a-Rama Museum (as close as you can get to Graceland without going there), the Imperial Palace Auto Collection (featuring the cars of Johnny Carson, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis), the Magic and Movie Hall of Fame at O'Shea's Casino or the gaudy Liberace Museum.

DRINK FOR FREE. If you're out of money and need to hit the sauce, park your butt in one of the sports-gambling areas and watch a game on one of the big screens. The waitress won't know that you didn't bet a dime on the game, and after a few rounds of free cocktails, you won't care about all the money you lost earlier.



ROCKIN' @ RA

the NEW games in town

spanish 21 Blackjack with crazy rules. You beat the dealer if you tie, you can double down on any total or number of cards (and then change your mind), you can split aces repeatedly and the casino pays bonuses for certain hands. The catch? There are no tens in the 48-card deck, boosting the casino's edge to slightly better than in normal blackjack.

let it ride A dumb version of poker. You make three equal bets. You get five cards, and two common cards for the table are added later. Your goal is to get a better poker hand than the dealer. At various points, you can take back one or two of your original wagers, or you can (as the name suggests) let it ride. Winning bets are paid at various odds (for instance, a straight gets you five to one). Plus, everyone has a chance to make a $1 side bet on each hand. That puts you in line for an extra payoff on certain winning hands.

caribbean stud Another poker game that pits all the players against the dealer. As with Let It Ride, payoffs are based on various odds. The downside: You are forced to decide whether to bet or fold after seeing only one of the dealer's cards—and you win only if your dealer has a qualifying hand (an ace–king or better). If the dealer doesn't, you get your bet back. The upside: Betting an extra dollar for the bonus payoff can be rewarding. A full house, for instance, might bring you an instant $150 payoff (depending on the casino) whether the dealer qualifies or not. A royal flush puts you in line for the progressive jackpot.

pai gow You get seven cards (so does the dealer) to make a five-card poker hand and a two-card hand. The dealer does the same. If you win both, you win. Lose both, and you lose. If you split, you tie. However, ties on the two-card hand go to the dealer.

casino war This one is easy—you played it when you were 10. It's high card. You get a card, and the dealer gets a card. Highest card wins. If there's a tie, you have to surrender or double your bet—but the dealer doesn't match it, meaning you're laying two-to-one odds to the dealer. This was a dumb game when you were 10, and it's no smarter now.

What about the old games? Craps and blackjack are still best. On craps, play the pass line and don't forget to play the odds (that means you'll place another wager right behind your original bet, usually equal to or higher than your original amount). You'll also want to give the dealer two more wagers (called place bets), and play the six and eight (you'll collect when a six or eight comes up—until a seven is rolled, of course). Don't play the big six–eight on your side of the table—that's a one-time bet on the next roll. With blackjack, take another card if you have a 16 or less and the dealer has a seven or higher showing. Video poker's odds, while still in the house's favor, aren't quite so brutal as with some of the new games.

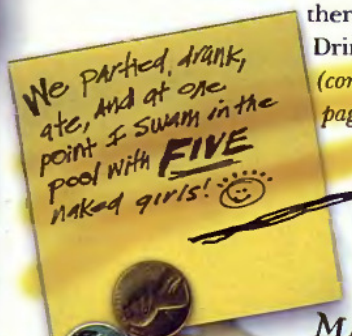
ten things that make Vegas Vegas

- World's largest rhinestone—weighing more than 50 pounds, at the Liberace Museum, of course
- Heaviest flag in the world—more than 10 tons of chain link, at the Harley-Davidson Cafe
- Largest bowling alley in the country—106 lanes, Showboat Bowling Center
- Ten largest hotels in the country—MGM Grand is the biggest, with 5005 rooms
- Country's largest indoor theme park—Adventuredome at Circus Circus
- World's highest roller coaster—1000 feet, at the Stratosphere
- Largest wig and hairpiece retailer—7000 wigs in stock at Serge's Showgirl Wigs
- Largest indoor canal in the world—at the Venetian
- World's largest souvenir shop—the Bonanza on the Strip
- Most expensive golf course in the country—Steve Wynn's Shadow Creek (it cost $45 million to build; greens fees are $1200 for one—but that includes a suite at the Bellagio)

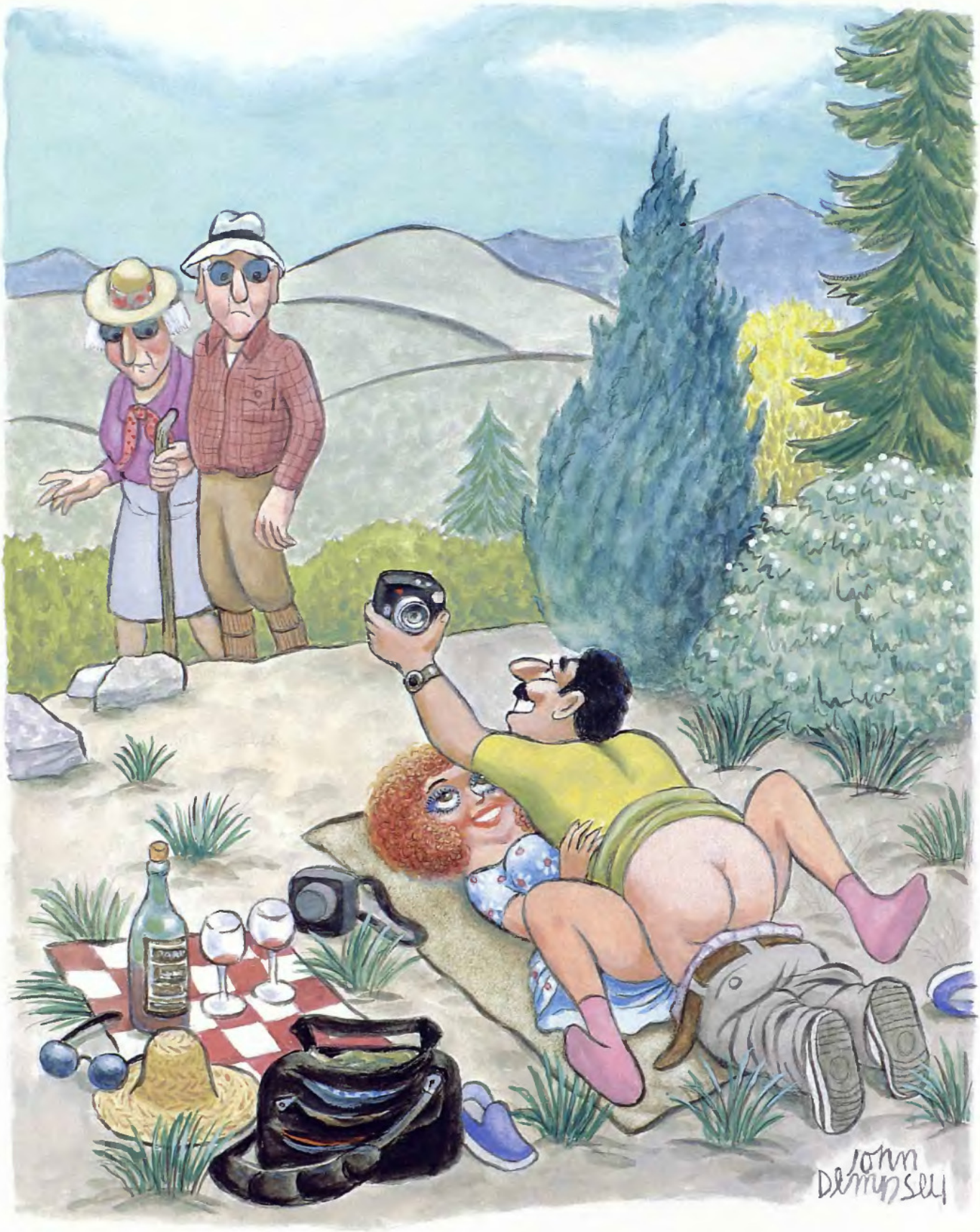
3 a.m. in VEGAS

Like everything else, celebrity works better in Vegas than elsewhere—even really minor celebrity. Gary Gray, known as Playboy TV's Helmetcam Man, is a good example. Here are a couple of Helmetcam Man's favorite Vegas stories: Once upon a time, I was eating dinner alone at the Hard Rock Casino. It was one A.M. and my friends had crashed early. I heard a buzz at the table next to me—"That's him," "No, it isn't," "Yes, it is"—before one of the guys finally came over and asked if I was Helmetcam Man. They concluded that Helmetcam Man should never eat alone and invited themselves to join me for dinner. Suddenly, they decided there were better things to do than eat—we should be drinking and picking up women. I ended up leaving with these complete strangers from New York City and we all ventured over to the Rio, where I assured them there'd be porn stars. I was right on target: the Rio was a who's who of porn. I shmoozed with all the girls and introduced the guys as my oldest friends in life—and as a result they got the royal treatment. Pictures, drinking, groping, etc. We then went into Club Rio and hooked up with more girls. One guy ended up leaving with one of the beauties we met. From there it was off to Drink, but this

(concluded on page 167)



MANDALAY BAY Resort & Casino



"Excuse me, folks. Would you be kind enough to take a snapshot of two tourists who are enjoying the natural surroundings of your beautiful countryside?"

DIGICAMS CAN

THE LATEST CROP OF DIGITAL SHARPSHOOTERS ARE WEB READY

BY DON SUTHERLAND

If you're looking for an excuse to buy a digital camera, we have one—the Internet. Not only can you attach your digital snapshots to e-mail and post them on personal webpages, you can also use the Net to have prints of digital files delivered to your door. Many web hubs also let you borrow sections of their real estate to create personal scrapbooks, which can be accessed by family, friends and that babe you met while vacationing in Europe. It's a photo revolution and it's a hot business. Of course, if you have a great idea for an e-business of your own, a digital camera can be a wise start-up tool. People like to look at sites with pretty pictures, and the latest digital shooters capture images that appear razor-sharp on-screen. Prints still

Clockwise from bottom left: Fuji's 4.3 megapixel FinePix 4700 Zoom is the world's smallest full-feature digicam. It's the first to use the company's new resolution-enhancing imaging sensor (about $1000). The two megapixel Sony DSC-F505 has a monstrous 5x telephoto lens, which can pivot up or down (about $1000). Ricoh calls its slick 3.3 megapixel RDC-7 a multimedia recording device—it can capture still and moving images, along with audio via a built-in microphone (about $1000). The through-the-lens viewfinder on Olympus' C2500L makes the 2.5 megapixel digicam feel more like a 35mm camera ($1500). Kodak's 1.5 megapixel DC4800 has manual controls and a 3x telephoto lens ($899). Nikon's Coolpix 990 is a 3.34 megapixel digicam with a 3x pivoting telephoto lens and a USB connection for high-speed transfer from camera to computer ($1000).

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES IMBROGNO

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 178.

RDC-7
image capturing device
OLYMPUS
CAMEDIA
DIGITAL CAMERA C-2500L
RICOH
Kodak
KODAK EKTANAR Lens
AutoFocus 3 X Zoom
DC4800
om Digital Camera
COOLPIX
990
Nikon
8 - 24mm

aren't as crisp as the ones you get from 35-millimeter film, but they're getting there. And if you prefer to get your digital snapshots printed the old-fashioned way—through a developer—most of the drop-off spots that process film also produce prints from digital media (and put them on a CD-ROM for long-term archiving).

CHOICES GALORE

The big question is how to choose among the dozens of digicams on the market. The most important feature to contemplate is resolution, which refers to the camera's ability to capture image detail. Take a look at our camera picks and you'll find a range of resolutions, from one megapixel (or 1 million pixels) to more than three megapixels. We could get geeky and explain exactly what this means. But all you need to know is that any camera labeled megapixel is going to take damn good high-resolution pictures. The more mega it is, the better the image clarity. Shoot your girlfriend with a low-res camera (one that displays under 300,000 pixels) and she'll be wearing a red nightie. Shoot her with a high-res model and she'll be wearing a red, translucent nightie with sexy trim. It's all about details. But even when you miss a few (because of poor lighting or bad composition), you can use digital darkroom software to tweak the image to perfection.

Another thing to consider is how you will use the camera. If you plan only to attach photos to e-mail, you can go with a more affordable (lower-res) model. (Prices start at $250.) If you want to get creative by editing, cropping and retouching images with photo finishing software such as Microsoft's Picture It 2.0 ($60), Kai's Super Goo ($50) or Sierra's Image Expert ($49.95 download; $69.95 CD-ROM), then you'll want as many pixels as you can afford. Three-megapixel cameras not only are the first models capable of printing crisp 8″x10″ enlargements, they also let you blow up background subjects in a photo (via darkroom software) for printing.

THE PERFECT BODY

Once you've figured out how sharp you want your shooter to be, you'll want to think about design. Some digicams, such as Fujifilm's FinePix 4700 Zoom and the Olympus C-2500L, uphold the look and feel of point-and-shoot film cameras. Others, like Nikon's Coolpix 990, Ricoh's RDC-7 and Sony's DSC-F505, have funky lenses that can be twisted in creative directions. You can shoot over heads in a crowd and over high walls, for example, or even over your own shoulder. If you prefer retro styling, Kodak's DC4800 has traditional knobs for setting some controls (compared with the digital menu prompts that appear on the LCDs of most digital cameras).

Another consideration is the viewfinder. Most models combine an optical viewfinder and a liquid crystal display for previewing and editing images on the fly. (Don't like a shot? Press a button and it's gone. Zero waste.) There are a few cameras, such as the Sony DSC-F505, however, that feature an LCD screen instead of a traditional optical viewfinder. Try framing a few shots on the tiny monitors of these LCD-only cameras before you break out your plastic. That way you'll know what to expect when you put the camera to work.

Panasonic's 1.3 megapixel PV-SD4090 stores compressed files on both 1.4 MB floppy disks and newer, 120 MB SuperDisks. Other features include a 3x telephoto lens, a 2.5-inch liquid crystal display and a USB connection (about $900).

ZOOMING FAR AND WIDE

Plan on shooting close-ups? Most digital cameras have the capability of a 2x telephoto lens. Sony's DSC-F505 reaches a telephoto equivalent of 3x. Obviously, a strong telephoto is best if you're shooting small or distant subjects. If you have the opposite need—you want to photograph large subjects at close range (say, the interiors of rooms)—you'll need a wide-angle lens. The widest-angle zoom comes with the Kodak DC4800. It sees about as much as a 28mm lens would on a 35mm camera. And that's wide.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Digital pictures are stored in the camera on miniature disk drives, or flash-memory cards, which function like hard drives without moving parts. Sony's Memory Stick is used in the DSC-F505. SmartMedia is used in the Fujifilm Finepix 4700, Ricoh RD-7 and Olympus C-2500L. And Compact Flash is used in the Kodak DC4800 and Nikon Coolpix 990. Despite competitive claims, the three flash-memory formats work about the same, with Compact Flash having the greatest capacity at 370 megabytes (enough to store hundreds of high-res images).

Adapters for MemoryStick and SmartMedia let you pop the cards into a floppy-disk drive. Compact Flash cards can be read only by a device that connects to your computer. Panasonic takes a unique storage route. The company claims that it manufactures the majority of the world's SuperDisk drives (which also read 3.5-inch floppies). Its PV-SD4090 reads and writes onto both disk formats. A 1.4 MB floppy can hold only a few megapixel files. But the SuperDisk diskette grants more room; (one diskette can hold up to 1500 compressed images). The PV-SD4090 houses a SuperDisk drive so it can be connected via USB port for direct-to-computer simplicity.

READY, SET, GO, GO, GO

Cameras now provide large buffers, internal memory that holds a picture while it's written to the memory card or disk. These buffers are large enough for several photos, allowing you to shoot in bursts. A digicam can currently hold about 1.5 frames per second for five seconds. That might seem plodding when you consider the four or more shots a 35mm camera can capture in a single spurt. But it's greyhound speed compared with the 10-second lapse early digicams required.

Quicker start-up is another welcome trend in current models. Some digicams took 20 seconds to turn on and get ready. Nikon's Coolpix 990 and Olympus' C-2500L claim a zero-to-shooting time of less than two seconds.

Two final features to consider when narrowing your choices are the mini-movie function that enables you to shoot 30-second video clips and built-in microphones for audio recording. Both features offer an easy way to jazz up e-mail or websites with moving images and sound.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In an effort to make their cameras stand out from the megapixel pack, manufacturers are touting a range of

(concluded on page 170)

"Now you can't tell me that wasn't more exciting than the last two minutes of a basketball game."

Howard Stern's Son of the Beach Has a New Star in Jaime Bergman

BLONDE ON THE BEACH

Rolling Stone has called *Son of the Beach* "Howard Stern's latest gift to cable television" and "a winning, fleshy throwback to the great smart-stupid sitcoms of the mid-Sixties like *F Troop* and *Get Smart*." Its stars include (from left to right) Roland Kickinger, Jaime Bergman, Timothy Stock, Leila Arcieri and Kim Ojo. Did Howard want to make sure Jaime was adept at mouth-to-mouth resuscitation before filming began? "I was a little scared about that," Jaime says with a laugh. "But the answer is *no*. In real life, Howard is shy and sweet."

HOWARD STERN knows a babe when he sees one. When it came time to fill the role of B.J. Cummings, the buoyant lifeguard on his hilarious *Son of the Beach*, all he had to do was open our January 1999 issue. There he found 45th Anniversary Playmate Jaime Bergman, a Utah cowgirl whose memorable pictorial was all horses and leather chaps and breasts and flowing blonde hair. Lucky for Howard (and men all over the planet), Jaime fell in love with the script, and started filming in December 1999. "To be honest, I was skeptical about doing the show because it's full of over-the-top humor," Jaime says. "It's a show you have to be mature to watch. It's not for kids. Also, I was scared that I would be typecast. I'm running around in a yellow bikini, you know? But then I figured, the writing is wonderful. And I'm probably going to get typecast anyway. I decided to have fun with it." Now, every Tuesday,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN WAYDA

B.J. Cummings can be seen busting up whorehouses, solving mysteries and falling for frat boys with venereal diseases (each episode reeks of Stern). So what if the lifeguards are hardly ever in the water? The *Baywatch* spoofs, plus the chemistry between Jaime and her co-stars (including comedy vet Timothy Stack, who plays boneheaded top lifeguard Notch Johnson), make the show work. That and the fact that the cast is clearly having a blast. "We can barely keep a straight face while filming," Jaime says. If you watch closely, you can tell. "Timothy, who is also one of the writers, tries to make us laugh until we lose it. We usually end up using the first take, because after that, everyone is cracking up." So far, ratings for *Son of the Beach* have been stellar. The network has ordered seven more episodes (in addition to the first six). Even *Entertainment Weekly*'s hard-to-please TV critic Ken Tucker gave the parody a B plus: "After people get a load of *Son of the Beach*'s definitive deconstruction, no one will look at syndicated lifeguarding with even the smallest suspension of disbelief again." Adds Jaime: "My favorite type of movie is the spoof, such as *Airplane*, *Austin Powers* and *Naked Gun*. The first time I saw *Airplane* I thought, This is so stupid. What are they doing? Then I figured out that it's supposed to be stupid. Our show is the same way. There's nothing like it on television. We're not trying to be Shakespeare or to win an Emmy. It's the perfect show for kicking back and drinking beer."

Check out Video Centerfold: Jaime Bergman from Playboy Entertainment.

Jaime on B.J. Cummings: "She's a California girl who thinks she's smart but is actually naive. She is lovable and caring and sweet. B.J. is a sketch artist and a model and a lifeguard. When she gives mouth-to-mouth, her technique is to straddle the victim. Plus, she has certain bouts with poor grammar. I think that's funny."

Jaime is also learning to deal with the strangeness of seeing herself on TV. "It's scary. I freeze up when the show's on. I get so embarrassed, because I'm new to acting. I've only been in Los Angeles for a few years. I'm still getting thrown into all these auditions. I'm still like, 'Oh my God, am I doing it right?' So far I've been lucky."

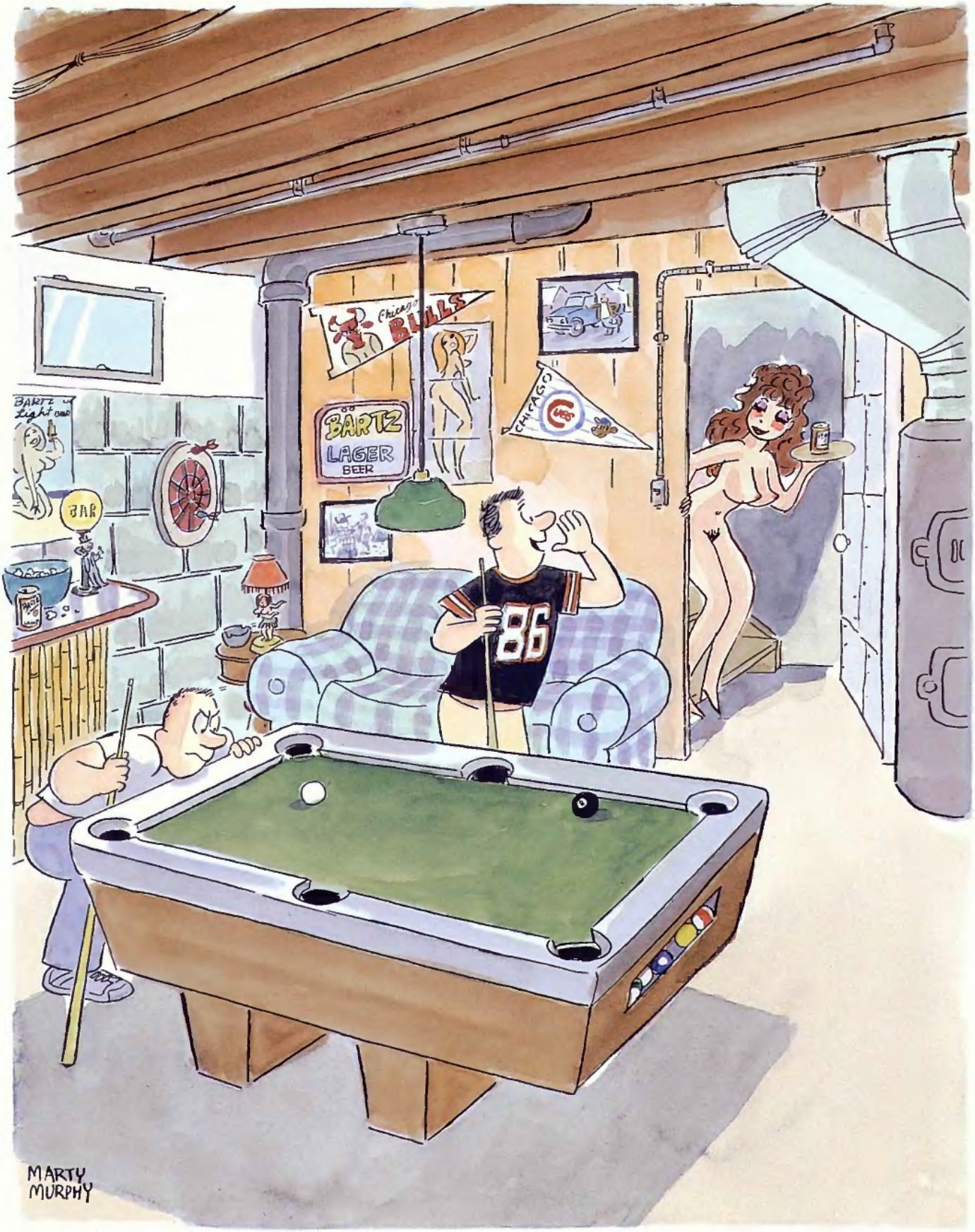
"I've been noticing in the past few weeks that people are really interested in who I'm dating. I get a lot of unsolicited comments about who should and shouldn't be in my life. It's retarded. I like to let people know who I'm with, to be proud of that. I was dating Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit. He's really cool and talented, but we're not together anymore. Now I'm not seeing anyone."

down with the farm

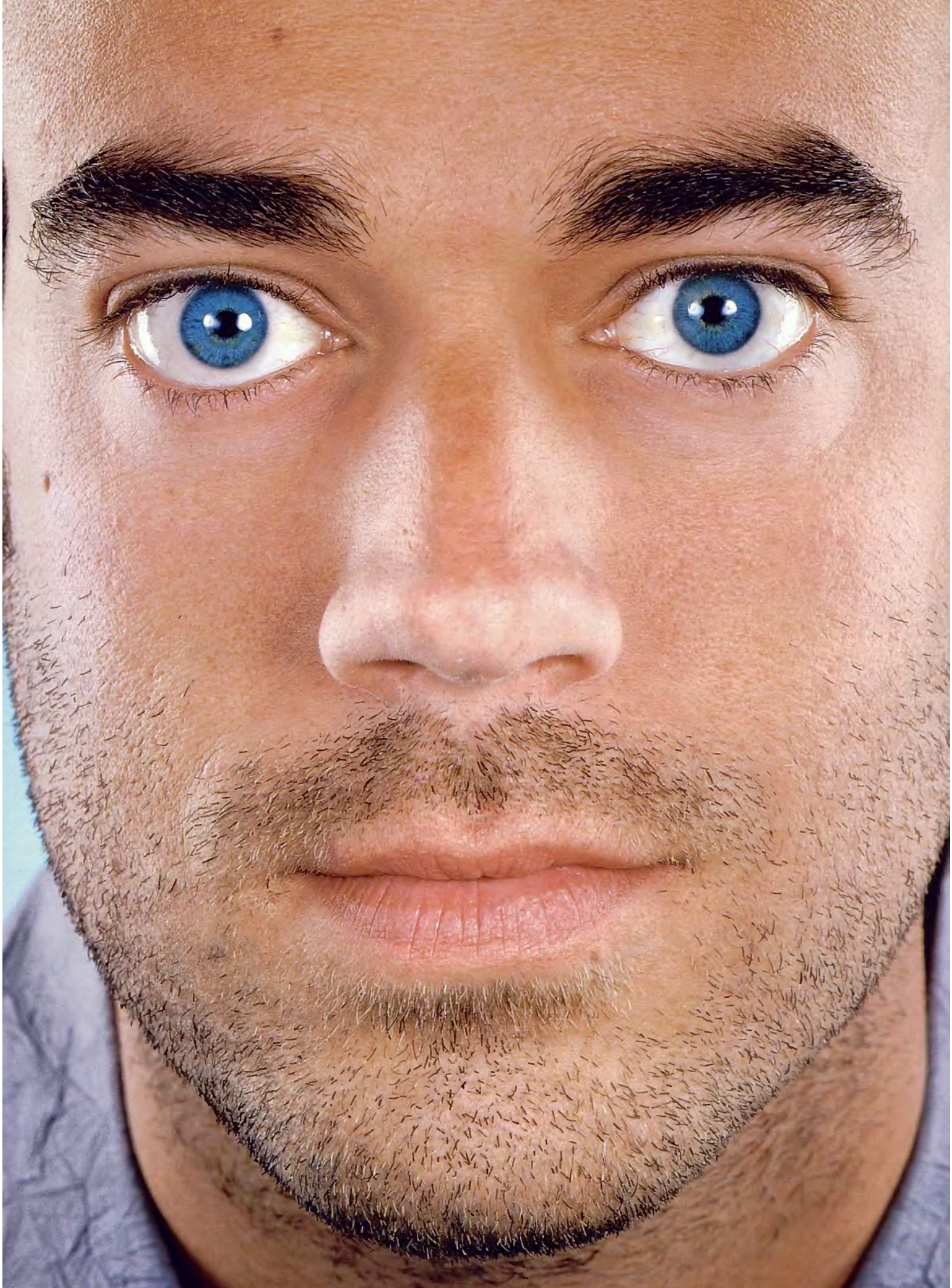
farmclub.com is the next big thing

Clockwise, from top left: The home page. The video vault. Landry and Pinfield. NWA. Dr. Dre and Eminem. Durst, Pinfield and Lisa Dergan. Sonique. Headboard's TV debut.

Jimmy and Doug's Farmclub.com is real. A gritty music show on the USA Network, hosted by Matt "120 Minutes" Pinfield and Ali "Doritos Girl" Landry, *Farmclub.com* is a groundbreaking *Stor Search–meets–Fridoy Night Videos* hybrid that combines live performances, band interviews and backstage footage with world-premiere videos. Here's the twist: If you are in an unsigned band, you can upload your music to the *Formclub.com* website. Site visitors, in turn, download your music for free and vote on whether they like it. If you get enough votes, *Farmclub.com* will fly you to Los Angeles to perform on the show. And if *Farmclub.com* honchos Jimmy Iovine (Interscope co-chairman) and Doug Morris (chief executive of Universal Music Group) toke a shine to you, you'll snog a record deal on the *Formclub.com* label. In other words, thanks to the Net, you can go from being in a garage band to being a rock star overnight. "It's guerrilla record making," says Iovine. "For the first time, fans and musicians have a direct effect on the music that will be avoiloble in the marketplace." One of Pinfield's duties as host is going out like Ed McMahon, surprising no-name bonds with plane tickets ond o chance to make it big. This, of course, inspires loads of tears and exclamations: "Oh my God, you're Matt Pinfield! We're going to be famous!" Call it real TV ot its finest. Back in the studio, television debuts are juxtoposed with performances by the likes of Beck, Primus, Fred Durst, Method Mon, Korn, Eminem, Dr. Dre, Macy Gray and NWA. ("We're gonna rock out here!" Pinfield shouts in the first episode—and he's right.) Of course, the freshman *Farmclub.com* is far from perfect—sometimes it feels like you're watching Battle of the Bands in your high school gym—but that's cool. We dig it raw, and *Farmclub.com* serves it up that way.



"Sweetheart! I just bet Ed $500 he can't sink the eight ball . . . how's about bringing him a cold beer . . . ?"



Carson Daly

mtv's top vj on the importance of ditching school, having acne and getting advice from dick clark

Three years ago, MTV plucked Californian Carson Daly from radio and moved him to the Big Apple, handed him a studio overlooking Times Square and charged him with reviving the network's sagging ratings. Daly's first days in New York were spent "talking to executives about the plan for making MTV cool again. We were at our worst." Daly and the MTV brass ("the young hip suits," he says, "even if they're not wearing suits") hit upon the formula of playing audience-requested videos and featuring celebrity drop-ins—amplified by all that street noise. It worked. The cable network's ratings surged.

Contributing Editor Warren Kalbacker and Daly recently watched from the studio as the barricades that control the crowds of teenagers who assemble outside for his broadcasts were dismantled and evening rush hour traffic clogged Broadway.

Kalbacker reports, "Despite the day-old stubble, earring and black leather jacket, Daly comes across as a wholesome guy. He's also a true broadcasting professional who likes to talk about audience demographics. He insists his viewers aren't exclusively the teens represented by the throng in the street below. Plenty of 20-somethings tune in, he says, and so do his father and his friends. 'They might not like the videos, because they're like 60 years old or whatever. But when we're on with Bill Murray or Madonna, they get into it a little.'"

1

PLAYBOY: Care to analyze the current status of sex, drugs and rock and roll?

DALY: Sex, drugs and rock and roll are why most people get into this business. Most guys in bands who have tons of sex, drugs and rock and roll weren't getting any in high school. But I don't think it's anywhere near what it used to be. Pop culture and music in general now are in a much cleaner, safer environment. With AIDS, sex can kill you. And the drugs have gotten so strong. We're not talking about a hallucinogenic that enhances cool writing. These drugs are ruining the music, screwing up the whole point, which is for a band to play live and connect with fans. A lot of my favorite artists from the early Nineties are in rehab. No one was more bombed than Scott Weiland. Stone Temple Pilots had to cancel a lot of tours. I'm a huge fan of theirs. I'm one of the rare people who didn't get into the business for sex or drugs, only for the rock and roll. I was a total geek. I was a golf fanatic. I really just wanted to have a nonnormal job. I wasn't motivated by whether I could get laid.

2

PLAYBOY: You debuted on air as a disc jockey. Tell us tales of Carson Daly's radio days.

DALY: It was a party every night. I got so many weird phone calls. The big thing when you're a DJ is that when a girl calls, you try to hit on her if she has a sexy voice. We had a poster of this really unattractive, disgusting woman holding a phone. The caption said, "This is who you're talking to right now."

I turned down a lot of opportunities. Most people in radio are desperate. A lot of them are losers. I was socially OK. I had tons of girlfriends and guy friends. I didn't really need my job to hook up. If you're drug free and you show up to do your shift every day, you're a god in radio. You'll be program director. That's why I moved up so fast. I got a job at KROQ in LA when I was 22. The job of disc jockey changed in the early Nineties, when grunge became popular. It represented angst. It wasn't the big, big voice. It was a normal dorky voice. I never went to broadcasting school. For four hours every night I invited my friends to the studio. I never scripted anything. I'd invite listeners up. I did a lot of contests. You get a tattoo guy to come in. Hey, 20th caller, you get a tattoo. I did a lot of piercings on the air. I had my nose pierced. MTV made me take the stud out. The hole is still there. I feel like poking through it again.

3

PLAYBOY: Are you concerned about the care and feeding of the screaming 14- and 15-year-old kids who wait patiently on the street in front of your studio?

DALY: When it rains, or when it's really cold in the winter, we'll bring in as many as we can legally. Why are they all out there? I don't know what's the attraction, especially on a day when we don't have a Madonna, a Jim Carrey, an Adam Sandler or somebody else they'd like to see. Unlike *Today* or *Good Morning America*, they don't get the best view. They can't even hear the show. Maybe it's just routine now. If they're in the area and can get down here, they know that every day at 3:30 there's a possibility of being on MTV. So they come down here with odd signs and gimmicks. Maybe young people today don't have a lot of things that are constant. Parents are divorced. Kids are doing some pretty whacked stuff. It's my job to entertain them for a bit. I'm still curious why they line up.

4

PLAYBOY: World-class peep shows and porn theaters dominated Times Square not so long ago. Can we pin their loss on MTV?

DALY: Times Square does have a Disneyland feel to it now. But we thought it would be a good place to broadcast. We started it. ABC just came in. So did the ESPN Zone. The WWF theme restaurant came in after we did. This is a safe area now. If you're upset about not getting hookers and drugs, you can blame us. But there are other places you can go.

5

PLAYBOY: The school day ends at three o'clock. *Total Request Live* airs half an

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

hour later, and young fans queue up early in the day. You wouldn't suspect at least a few are cutting classes?

DALY: I'm sure they are. I used to ditch school myself, to go to the beach or hang out with my friends. If they are cutting school, you know, what can you say? What parents wouldn't have missed school to get as close as they could to the Beatles? Today they're coming down to *TRL* to catch a glimpse of the Backstreet Boys. Pretty decent reason to ditch. I would like to bring up 40 students who ditched—we've had that happen before—and call the school and get the principal on the phone. "Mr. So and So, this is Carson on MTV. I just want you to know, I have your kids. They're safe. They'll make up the time. We have a really cool Rage Against the Machine world premiere. It's socially aware. And they're going to hang out with me. No problem."

6

PLAYBOY: Your young audience is remarkably blemish free. Have prescription drugs such as Differin and Accutane eliminated acne as a teenage rite of passage?

DALY: Absolutely. Look at the kids today. Some of the girls are 15 and look like they're 30-year-old supermodels. Kids today have better medical care, a remedy for everything. And maybe something in the genes. Kids grow up so fast now. When I had acne, it wasn't that big of a deal, because everybody had it. My choices were Clearasil and tetracycline. If it was really bad you might get Retin-A. I think we should bring acne back, because it's a part of growing up. It builds character. You need to get picked on.

7

PLAYBOY: One newspaper reporter referred to you as the "dreamy Carson Daly." Have you stopped to consider the adjectives they're teaching in journalism school nowadays?

DALY: I think she meant that young girls think I'm cute or whatever. I consider it facetious, so I've stopped reading about myself.

8

PLAYBOY: The music video: ultimate triumph of lip-synching or a firmly established art form?

DALY: If you're an artist, you can fill a canvas with only so much paint. You come to a point where your work is done. What the music video has done is enable musicians to further their art. Videos provide another artistic outlet. I think it's very cool—it has married music and film. And now the directors of these videos are doing films and actors are doing videos. It has opened a million doors in the entertainment business.

9

PLAYBOY: Madonna recently appeared on *Total Request Live*. Does she deserve her rep as a legend?

DALY: What's cool about Madonna and why I think she's a legend is that she was on *TRL*. What we fight with most are artists who worry about their image and who say the show isn't cool because it's only the popular stuff. But Madonna is big today because she has the courage to come on a show that she might not like—she'd never seen *TRL*. But she knew an awful lot about our show and pop culture the day she came on.

10

PLAYBOY: Is this MTV gig a whole lot better than a dot-com start-up for Carson Daly?

DALY: We're not whoring out this project yet. I came into this to fulfill my own needs and my love for music. And I think it's contagious. We never set out to have the highest ratings of any MTV daily show. We never set out to be powerful enough to pull Madonna or to be called the epicenter of pop culture or to be compared to *American Bandstand*. It just happened.

11

PLAYBOY: You sought out Dick Clark. Did he offer you advice on how to make a career last? Can we look forward to Carson Daly hosting quiz shows and *New Year's Rockin' Eve*?

DALY: Yes. That's why I went to visit Dick Clark's house. I'm driving around LA, I'm thinking about my career and how I don't want to just do this MTV thing, and boom, I'm a has-been. How can I be smart and take full advantage of the opportunity? Dick Clark popped into my head. So I called him. The receptionist put me on hold for a moment and then told me to come in. I cruised over to the shack with my résumé in hand, because how would he know who I am? And Dick walks in and says, "You're the Carson Daly I'm hearing so much about." It was like seeing a shrink. We sat in two big chairs and I just said, "Here's where I'm at in my life and this is where I want to go." We talked about day-in-day-out decision making, coming to an understanding of why you want to do things. Being smart. Building from within. Moving slowly. Not caring about quick success. He said he'd worked his ass off, going to New York and shooting six *$10,000 Pyramid* shows a day. So I'm taking this in. And now when my days get packed and I start to think I should take some time off, I go back to what Dick told me in that meeting: Have a successful work ethic. I begged him to let me host the *American Music Awards*. And he said maybe next year.

12

PLAYBOY: You've hosted a couple of beauty pageants in the past year. Do you prefer the swimsuit or evening gown competitions?

DALY: I didn't even pay attention to the beauty contests or the evening gowns. I only did the beauty pageants to test my range as a host, to see if I was capable of hosting a two-hour, big-time network show. All I'd ever done was MTV. I was such a production whore. I'm trying to be a sponge right now and learn everything in the business. The scenery wasn't bad at all. Absolutely not. But the last person to hook up with one of the girls is the host. All eyes are on you. The contests were different. The Miss Teen USA girls were young and scared and happier to see 'N Sync, who performed on that telecast, than they were about winning. They were squealing and—oh my God—had lots of energy. I was like a big brother, telling them to relax and making them feel at home while we were on the air. The Miss USA girls? A whole different ball game. Those chicks are opportunists. They all want to make it. They worked the environment. They're like, "So who's your agent?"

13

PLAYBOY: You've been interviewed by Regis Philbin. Did you feel a need to reach out to a lifeline?

DALY: I remember being nervous. We talked about my career. And I've been back three times since. Regis has the whitest teeth you'll ever see. Regis works out where I do. I'm on the treadmill and there's George Stephanopoulos to my right, Regis to my left, Peter Jennings doing stretches in the corner. And maybe Ed Bradley doing a little cardio. I couldn't even afford a gym membership two years ago. Regis invited me to his house for a Christmas party. He sent me a handwritten invitation: Joy and I want you to cruise by and hang out. He's one of the coolest guys in the business today. Peter Jennings has never invited me anywhere.

14

PLAYBOY: Have you discovered the joys of golf on the East Coast?

DALY: St. Andrew's up in Westchester is a great place to play. Those old courses are short, but they're tight. I grew up at the Riviera Country Club in LA. These are courses with a sense of tradition, and that's what I love. Golf is a traditional sport. Nothing pisses me off more than all the electronics now. They have a global satellite positioning system in golf carts now at resorts in Hawaii so you can drive right to your ball. It's ridiculous. I like to go out on the golf course and be respectful. I played with wooden woods for a long time. The putter should be the

most traditional old thing in the bag. I had an old Ben Hogan putter. It was raggedy and even had a leather grip on it. I called my putter Old Faithful before tournaments. I would clean it and talk to it and sleep with it. Golf is very vibey. What separated me from succeeding or not succeeding in golf was putting. If I had the short putts, I was going to shoot 65. If I didn't, I wasn't going anywhere. Tiger Woods was responsible for my getting out of golf. He was at a lot of the events I was at and we played several times. He kicked everybody's ass. He is the Michael Jordan of that sport and was destined to be great.

15

PLAYBOY: We wouldn't be surprised to learn that you were an altar boy. Did you ever don a cassock and surplice?

DALY: I was a good altar boy. Everybody else was screwing around. I took it seriously. At one point in the mass—the consecration of the host—the priest says to the congregation, while he's offering the host, "Do this in remembrance of me." That's your cue as an altar boy to ring the bells. I was an altar boy with another kid who just wanted to go out and skateboard. And he rang the bells at the wrong time. Man, that was a big mistake. He's going to hell and I'm not. I was so excited about being in a church. It was like being in a painting. I was drawn to the dramatics of it. It was a really cool cultural thing for me. It was better than sitting at home watching reruns of *Happy Days*.

16

PLAYBOY: Surely it was the long theology studies rather than the vow of celibacy that persuaded you to choose a career in entertainment over the Roman Catholic priesthood.

DALY: I think my job is harder than being a priest. I fight more temptation than I would have if I had taken those vows. When I was in high school there were a couple of priests who were really cool, young and hip. But I've created my own spirituality. Religion, not necessarily Catholicism, is intriguing. Now I'm obviously in a different line of work. Spirituality has always been my reality check. It's the one thing that's constant to me. It's what I bounce things off of. But if I say I'm Catholic, and that I'm a spiritual person and have ethics and morals and that's why I'm not doing drugs or acting like a complete asshole, that doesn't get conveyed. The writers aren't articulate, or they're not smart enough to understand where I'm coming from, or the readers have short attention spans—"This guy is a Jesus freak." It's sad. Howard Stern read that I prayed when my mother had breast cancer. He called me a Jesus freak.

17

PLAYBOY: Carson Daly and Jennifer Love Hewitt. What went wrong?

DALY: That would be a great question to ask her. If you find the answer, tell me. She dumped me. Howard Stern said it was because she met someone else. The guy on the E channel said it was mutual, which it wasn't, because I didn't know anything about it. We dated for two years. When we started dating, I wasn't anything and she was so famous. Then it was "Who's this guy Jennifer's dating?" During our relationship my popularity rose a little. The reason I can sit here and talk about it is that I'm in a better place now than during our relationship. I consciously did everything I could do as a man to be the right person. I did everything. I flew to Los Angeles every frigging weekend just to see her for a day. I have no regrets. I didn't do anything wrong. That helps with recovery. I got dumped. Her loss.

18

PLAYBOY: Did Dick Clark warn you about the temptations of payola?

DALY: No. I respect him too much to go there. What's funny is that *TRL*'s popularity has made it such an important part of the success plan for bands and artists now, and because of its relentless ratings people have assumed that something must be going on. Frankly, Madonna needs to stop by *TRL* if she wants to sell a lot of records to young hip people in America. After we started playing Kid Rock's first single, *Devil Without a Cause*, he sold 7 million records over a year. I'm not saying that's all because of *TRL*. But he would tell you himself that it was at MTV's Fashionably Loud in Miami where it started for him. But there's nothing going on. We open up the phone lines and take e-mail. And the kids pick the videos. I'm friends with people in record companies and I'll tell you straight up that no one has ever propositioned me. I'm wondering what happened to payola and plugola. Maybe the government's too involved now.

19

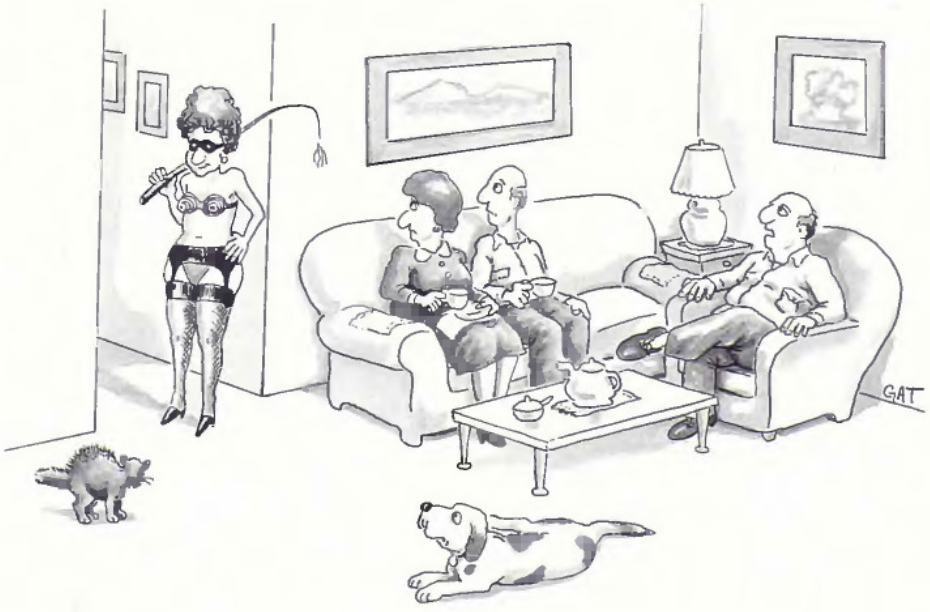
PLAYBOY: Press reports indicate that after winning her Grammy for best new artist, Christina Aguilera called her mother and then Carson Daly. How busy is your social life?

DALY: We're friends. Christina was one of the co-hosts for New Year's last year. We have on-air chemistry and flirt a little. She performed on my show at the Superbowl and she happened to be there when I hosted the Miss USA pageant. We were at these different events and the country was just going nuts. The events were strictly coincidences. We hang out and go out to dinner.

20

PLAYBOY: Would you ever suspect you're not being loved for your good looks and native intelligence?

DALY: I might be consensually used up to a point where I was uncomfortable. I think I'd be smart enough to pick up on it, but if there were a win-win situation involved I might let it go as far as I thought it would be safe. But I've seen so much now. You have to be defensive about why people are involving themselves in your life. People want stuff.



"My wife's been experiencing a few side effects with her new hormone pills."

Bachelor Parties

(continued from page 92)

the next day. If they hadn't pissed off Michelle, they would never have learned of the secret location. And if he hadn't thrown up, there probably wouldn't have been a wedding."—JB, 56, financier in New York.

Cost: "Free to me."

Emotional price: "Guilt all around."

Would you do it again? "The marriage ended in divorce after five years."

Best Oater: "At the last party I attended, we went to the Russian baths and ended up in the back room of a Ukrainian restaurant in the East Village. The groom's buddy casually placed a camcorder on the table when the stripper arrived. We all thought it was hilarious when things got out of hand. She was a dominatrix. Put a saddle on the near-naked bachelor and rode him around the table, spanking him to go faster. She had him make noises like a donkey. He was crocked and didn't realize he was being taped. We watched the tape without him the next day and it was weird. Maybe a little eerie and disturbing, too. We all felt like shit for doing that to him. That was the first time I felt sorry for Pam Anderson and Tommy Lee."—Ed, 29, New York musician.

Cost: $50.

Emotional price: "Mild."

Would you do it again? "Never bring a camera. Never."

Most Sickening Case of PDA: "We were barhopping for a bachelor party and we came across some girls who were having a bachelorette party. They had the bride-to-be covered in candy or Life Savers or something—for a dollar you could bite one off with your teeth. So my friend Greg walks over with 100 bucks and says, 'Here. Now you have to hang with us.' The numbers were even and we had a great time—eventually pairing off. The bride and groom were like prom king and queen. I swear, about five of my friends hooked up that night."—Kevin, 27, bartender from New Jersey.

Cost: "That 100 bucks was worth it."

Emotional price: "I got a phone number and I called the next day."

Would you do it again? "Yes. Whenever people complain about how hard it is to meet people, I think of that night."

Most Sickening Case of Beer: "Cards and beer, beer and cards. We made a pact we would rent a hotel room and spend 24 hours in it playing cards and drinking beer. We went through every fart joke known to man, with sound effects. Finally, we got so crazy—I mean the stupidest stuff was making us laugh, there was a flood in the bathroom—we started calling people to show up and bring us stuff. By the end we had a potted plant in there, these inflatable toys, even a dog. And this 80-year-old guy showed up. Cool guy. Heard us down the hall and decided, you know, 'I can't beat you so I have to join you.'"—Todd, 28, pool installer from Florida.

Cost: "I actually made money. Plus, the bottle returns totaled something like $47."

Emotional price: "The dog wasn't ours, so we felt bad when we returned it."

Would you do it again? "No way. Twenty-four hours is a serious commitment."

Worst Story to Read if You're Thinking of Inviting Your Father-in-Law: "Seventeen years ago, when I was in college, I watched a guy from my summer job get blown while his best friend banged the woman from behind. And this was my first bachelor party. My boss, Jimmy, was an ex–motorcycle repairman, and the party crowd was full of beer-guzzling bikers. I was crocked by the time the entertainment arrived—a wonderful Asian chick who was accompanied by a man-mountain from the Hell's Angels. First, she did a 15-minute, tendon-popping floor show. I was in love. Until, for the finale, she sat Jimmy in a chair and ministered to him while the lucky groom brought up the rear. The real crazy thing was that the bride's father was there—and he was hooting and hollering with the rest of the guys. Whoa."—Bobby, 36, graphic designer in New York.

Cost: "I don't remember paying anything. I think Jimmy footed the bill. It might also have been the night his wraparound porch collapsed under everybody's weight, but I'm really not sure. If it was, then the party was more expensive than he planned."

Emotional cost: "None. Not for me, not for the groom. Not for the bride's dad, either, apparently."

Would you do it again? "Like I said, I didn't do anything."

Best Story to Read if You're Thinking of Inviting Your Father-in-Law: "One guy I knew invited everyone, including the men from the family of the bride. During the course of this drunken evening, secrets were exchanged between father and groom—without the protective filter of the bride. The prospective groom was no Phi Beta Kappa. I think he was trying to explain how much he loved this guy's daughter because she knew how to do this and that sexually. It

What Your Girlfriend Thinks

Myth: Any bachelor party that excludes women usually involves twisted sex acts.
Reality: It's more likely that one of 20 parties gets truly bawdy.

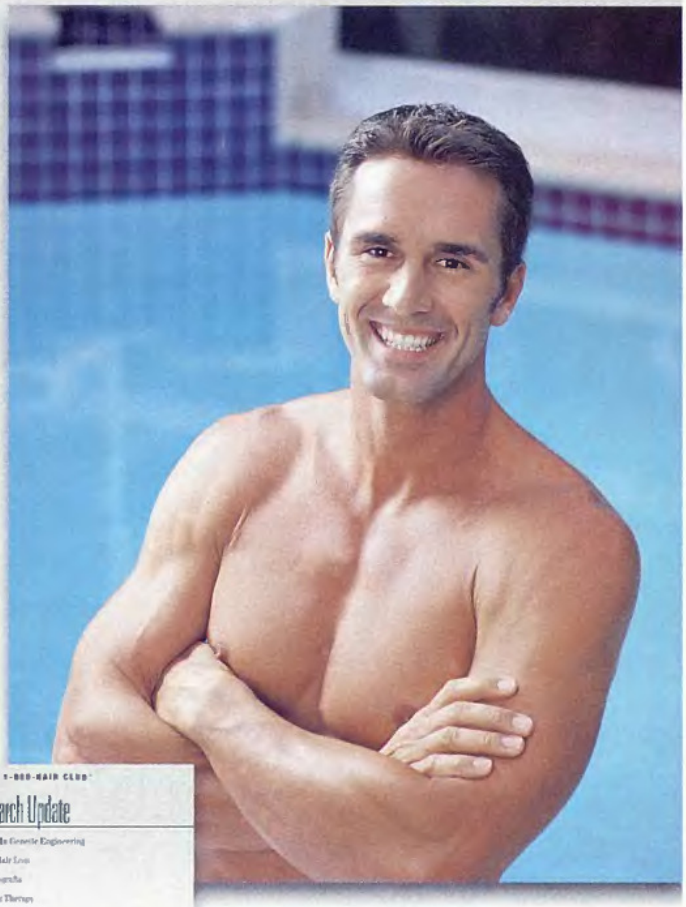
Myth: Bachelor parties aren't really any fun. He just doesn't want to let down his buddies.
Reality: We wouldn't go to them if they weren't any fun.

Myth: All strippers are hookers.
Reality: Hookers just aren't that good-looking.

Myth: His wife or girlfriend would probably put on a better show than the hired help.
Reality: That's probably right.

KEESTER ISLAND

Who Says Clothes Make The Man?



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was probably the best party. It erupted into a fistfight between the father of the bride and the groom. The wedding was called off. There are two rules to follow about bachelor parties. One is: Don't pet the donkey. The other is: Never invite your father-in-law. Never! I went to another party after which a guy went home and told his girlfriend what the stripper had done to the groom. That wedding was canceled also."—Paul, 31, Chicago fireman.

Cost: "A wicked hangover."

Emotional price: "A steep price paid by the ex-groom."

Would you do it again? "I love that sort of thing."

Why Stupid to Us Is Evil to Her: "I once found myself in the middle of my living room stuck between my friends Mark and Jennifer. Thanks to a gossipy girlfriend, Jennifer had caught sour wind of a bachelor party that Mark had attended. Jennifer was crying and Mark was wilting under her hydraulic pressure. He had taken part in a stupid stripper stunt. Each guy at the party took turns lying on his back. The stripper then straddled his face, her third eye winking at him from a few inches up, and proceeded to pour beer onto her pussy and into his mouth. 'And you're going to be the father of my child?' Jennifer sobbed (did I mention that she was pregnant?). 'Phil would never do anything like that.' My omniscient wife turned to look at me, half-smiling. I just shrugged. I was more concerned with what the strippers called that drink in private. Pussy punch? Malt lick-her? Sour mash? A head of beer? If she didn't shave, then it would be billy goat brew. If she did, why, then it would be a mess."—Phil, 32, Chicago salesman.

Cost: "I think he spent $75."

Emotional price: "Heavy. Major."

Would he do it again? "Yeah. I got the sense he wasn't caving in because he didn't want to promise to never do it again."

Longest Run Off-Broadway: "In my hometown, you could go to a bachelor party every weekend. You didn't have to know the groom or anybody else. You could just buy a ticket from Ralph or Teddy or Jimmy. 'You know—the guy who's friends with Kenny. The guy who once fixed Stephanie's Camaro? He used to go out with Angie? His brother Vinny Goombatz is getting married. $30.' You show up at the basement of a family-style Italian restaurant and it's all you can eat and drink, with entertainment. One night a stripper, as they sometimes did, started giving $20 blow jobs in the bathroom. When she took the occasional cigarette break she sat next to my friend John. He could charm the shorts off a female golfer. So he was honored to accept her offer of a free fuck at the end of the evening. It was something he bragged about the next day until someone asked, 'Did you use a condom?' John's face turned green. Thankfully, his dick never did. At least he didn't go down on her. I think."—Pete, 31, actor from LA.

Cost: "A hangover."

Emotional price: "He was nervous until he got tested."

Would you do it again? "Nah, those buy-a-ticket parties get boring."

Nastiest Scrum: "I'm a former semi-pro rugby player. I was living with my wife in a duplex in Louisville, Kentucky. A guy from another rugby team lived upstairs. He was throwing a bachelor party for his brother and he invited me. I couldn't go because it was on a Wednesday night. Well, at 2:30 in the morning the fucking music is blaring and I can't go to sleep. My wife says, 'You have to go upstairs and tell them to knock it off.' Shit. I trudge up the back stairs, walk through the open kitchen door and there are like eight guys, you know, in a circle. They all have their dicks out and this girl is sucking one off and getting it from behind from another. She's taking turns blowing everybody. I go, 'Oh, Jesus Christ.' Caleb looks at me and goes, 'You want a piece of this?' I go, 'No man, I gotta get up early in the morning. I'll take a rain check.' He goes, 'The music's kind of loud, isn't it?' I go, 'Yeah. If you could just turn it down a bit.' All I remember is the girl was like a clock, doing one guy then rotating to the next. They're all sitting there with cherubic smiles on their faces. You know, it's a professional rugby team. What can I say? They share too much. No intimacy issues there. So I went back downstairs and tried to get to sleep. My wife said, 'What's going on up there?' And I said, 'Honey, you don't want to know.' Some things are just better left unsaid."—Bill,

Famous Myths

When Shannen Doherty offered Heidi Fleiss a mere $200 per girl for her fiancé Ashley Hamilton's bachelor party, Heidi allegedly asked her, "Why don't you do it yourself?"

It's rumored that one of Princess Caroline's husbands threw a party on a chartered jet that circled the globe.

Legend has it that Prince Philip's bachelor party is still going on full-force in the basement of Buckingham Palace.

"Aren't you being a bit monopolistic, Jane? Sort of like Microsoft?"

33, TV production guy from Washington, D.C.

Cost: "Free, obviously."

Emotional price: "The loss of my innocence" [*laughs*].

Would you do it again? "I don't need to see that again."

Best Dumb Stunt: "Two Tons of Fun was a woman who performed at a party in central Connecticut. This lady was big—real big. About 300-plus pounds. She stood behind me and wrapped her tits around my head. I couldn't see or breathe. She even did it to my friend Joe, who has a monster noggin. For her finale, she picked up the groom like an old-fashioned wrestler, put him on her shoulders and twirled him around. Set him down just in time for him to heave in the bathroom. I ended up passing out at my parents' house after going to a strip club. This cutie had pulled my glasses off my head and run them up and down—once in each direction—in her snatch. Popped them back on my head. I remember hearing everyone roaring. I couldn't see them laugh, though, because the lenses were fogged up. Next thing I know, my father is shaking me awake the next morning at six A.M. I was lying on my back in the den, white snow blaring on the TV, my belt undone and my hand wedged down my pants. He was going ballistic—I had fallen asleep with my mouth open and I stunk pretty bad. It wasn't until my dog walked over and stuck her tongue down to my tonsils that I could moisten my mouth enough to croak a response. I had to leave pronto if I wanted to make the wedding that morning. Did I mention that I had to pick up my boss and her son, who lived an hour away? My parents wanted to punish me for being in such crappy shape. They didn't want me to use their car, so I shocked them by dialing up cab service (remember, this is Connecticut) to take me to an Avis. My boss looked oddly at the Grand Am ('I thought your family drove Camrys') but didn't notice it was a rental. I was 24. I felt pretty satisfied with the whole thing until the church ceremony, when my boss' son asked me to explain a portion of the ceremony. I leaned over and told him. 'Man,' he said, loud enough to turn heads, 'your breath stinks!'"—Tom, 26, dot-com dude, Connecticut.

Cost: "Dunno. Money flew out of my pocket."

Emotional price: "Neutral. Tense moments with the parents, but it was a turning point."

Would you do it again? "I never do anything the day after a party like that."

Scariest Moment: "To be sure, guys are some fucked monkeys. Sometimes it's best not to know what makes your buddy tick. In the mustier recesses of my mind, there is a scene from a party my brother took me to. There wasn't much but drinking going on. On a TV in the corner of one room porn videos were playing in an endless loop. The novelty wore off early for the groom. Finally, most guys drifted away from the set until only one guy was left. There was talk of going to a strip club. In one of those odd, movie-style moments, the conversation ebbed just in time for the man in front of the tube—lost in his own world and forgotten in ours—to suddenly shout at the screen, 'Yeah, fuck her, fuck her, yeah. *Punch her in the cunt!*' Talk about a showstopper. Nobody said anything for a good 30 seconds."—Carl, 34, banker in Boston.

Cost: $30.

Emotional price: "The guy never lived it down."

Would you do it again? "Sure."

The Inside Word on Men's Clubs—and Why You Want to Join One: "Since I'm the manager at a men's club, I keep a card on file for the guys who want much more than the standard strip show. These two girls, Coco and Electra, are absolutely unbelievable. We're talking butt beads. One girl will stick them all the way up the other girl's butt and then have a guy pull them out for her with his mouth. They both have strap-ons, and they do each other in the pussy and the ass. I mean, it's incredible. Or they'll put a lollipop in the groom's mouth and they will pull it out with their vagina lips. It's just 45 minutes of hardcore lesbianism, dildos, everything. I've called them in three times for people who want to get really, really raunchy. Coco is Hispanic. Electra is absolutely gorgeous. She's the one who I guess you'd say fits the submissive role. She takes most of the stuff in her ass and all that other good stuff. Since we're a private club I can close it off. Nobody gets hurt or gets seen, and I don't say anything. They pay me to keep my mouth shut. Usually it starts at 10 or 11 o'clock. The groom will pass out, they'll just prop him up in a chair, you know, take his clothes off. You know, it's not about the groom. We have side rooms, too. Stuff happens behind closed doors, so I don't care. Just be sure that you're out of here when I tell you to go. Many times the party will pay for the girls to do stuff to us. Put some whipped cream on the tits and give one to the bartender or manager. Some of them have offered to pay for blow jobs and whatever, but, unfortunately, I'm wearing the world's smallest handcuff on my finger."—Duffy, 46, private club director in Philadelphia.

Cost: "I get paid to watch this stuff."

Emotional price: "Not for nothing, but you get sort of jaded after a while."

Would you do it again? "All in all, I get good reactions. I haven't heard any complaints."

For more on bachelor parties, go to playboy.com/bachelorparty.

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OMERTA

(continued from page 78)

Rosie had a mischievous smile on her face. "And if I win, Stace gets tonight with me."

nearly choked on his espresso saying it.

There was a long silence, and then for the first time Heskow caught the chill of death the twins could radiate.

Franky said quietly, "You made us drive 3000 miles to offer us this job?"

Stace smiled at Heskow and said, "John, it's been nice knowing you. Now just pay our kill fee and we'll be moving on." Both twins laughed at this little joke, but Heskow didn't get it.

One of Franky's friends in LA, a freelance writer, had once explained to the twins that though a magazine might pay him expenses to do an article, they would not necessarily buy it. They would just pay a small percentage of the agreed-upon fee to kill the piece. The twins had adopted the practice. They charged just to listen to a proposition. In this case, because of the travel time and the fact that there were two of them involved, the kill fee was $20,000.

But it was Heskow's job to convince them to take the assignment. "The Don has been retired for three years," he said. "All his old connections are in jail. He has no power anymore. The only one who could make trouble is Timmona Portella, and he won't. Your payoff is a million bucks, half when you're done and the other half in a year. But for that year, you have to lay low. Everything is set up. All you guys have to be is the shooters."

"A million bucks," Stace said. "That's a lot of money."

"My client knows it's a big step to hit Don Aprile," Heskow said. "He wants the best help. Cool shooters and silent partners with mature heads. And you guys are simply the best."

Franky said, "And there are not many guys who would take the risk."

"Yeah," Stace said. "You have to live with it the rest of your life. Somebody coming after you, plus the cops, and the feds."

"I swear to you," Heskow said, "the NYPD won't go all out. The FBI will not take a hand."

"And the Don's old friends?" Stace asked.

"The dead have no friends." Heskow paused for a moment. "When the Don retired, he cut all ties. There's nothing to worry about."

Franky said to Stace, "Isn't it funny, in all our deals they always tell us there's nothing to worry about?"

Stace laughed. "That's because they're not the shooters. John, you're an old friend. We trust you. But what if you're wrong? Anybody can be wrong. What if the Don still has old friends? You know how he operates. No mercy. We get nailed, we don't just get killed. We'll spend a couple of hours in hell first. Plus, our families are at stake under the Don's rule. That means your son. Can't play for the NBA in his grave. Maybe we should know who's paying for this."

Heskow leaned toward them, his light skin a scarlet red, as if he were blushing. "I can't tell you that. You know that. I'm just the broker. And I've thought of all that other shit. You think I'm fucking stupid? Who doesn't know who the Don is? But he's defenseless. I have assurances from the top levels. The police will just go through the motions. The FBI can't afford to investigate. And the top Mafia heads won't interfere. It's foolproof."

"I never dreamed that Don Aprile would be one of my marks," Franky said. The deed appealed to his ego. To kill a man so dreaded and respected in his world.

"Franky, this is not a basketball game," Stace warned. "If we lose, we don't shake hands and walk off the court."

"Stace, it's a million bucks," Franky said. "And John never steered us wrong. Let's go with it."

Stace felt the excitement building. What the hell. He and Franky could take care of themselves. After all, there was the million bucks. If truth were told, Stace was more mercenary than Franky, more business-oriented, and the million swung him.

"OK," Stace said, "we're in. But God have mercy on our souls if you're wrong." He had once been an altar boy.

"What about the Don being watched by the FBI?" Franky asked. "Do we have to worry about that?"

"No," Heskow said. "When all his old friends went to jail, the Don retired like a gentleman. The FBI appreciated that. They leave him alone. I guarantee it. Now let me lay it out."

It took him a half hour to explain the plan in detail.

Finally, Stace said, "When?"

"Sunday morning," Heskow replied. "You stay here for the first two days. Afterward the private jet flies you out of Newark."

"We have to have a very good driver," Stace said. "Exceptional."

"I'm driving," Heskow said, then added, almost apologetically, "It's a very big payday."

•

For the rest of the weekend, Heskow babysat for the Sturzo brothers, cooking their meals, running their errands. He was not a man easily impressed, but the Sturzos sometimes sent a chill to his heart. They were like adders, their heads constantly alert, yet they were congenial and even helped him tend to the flowers in his sheds.

The brothers played basketball one-on-one just before supper, and Heskow watched, fascinated by how their bodies slithered around each other like snakes.

COMING TO GRIPS WITH INFIDELITY

Franky was faster and a deadly shooter. Stace was not as good but more clever. Franky could have made it to the NBA, Heskow thought. But this was not a basketball game. In a real crisis, it would have to be Stace. Stace would be the primary shooter.

•

On a cold December Sunday noon, bright with a lemon-colored light, the Aprile family went to Saint Patrick's on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to attend the confirmation of the Don's 12-year-old grandson. The brilliant sunshine etched the image of that great cathedral into the streets around it. Don Raymonde Aprile, Valerius (the boy's father) and his wife, Marcantonio, the second son, and Nicole, his daughter, watched the cardinal himself, red-hatted and sipping wine, give Communion and administer heaven's admonitory ceremonial slap on the cheek.

Out on the steps of the cathedral, the children shed their robes and showed off their hidden finery. The girls in frail, cobwebby white-lace dresses, the boys in their dark suits, glaring white shirts and traditional red neckties knitted at their throats to ward off the devil.

Don Aprile emerged from the church, Astorre, his nephew, on one side, Marcantonio on the other. The children milled around in a circle, Valerius and his wife proudly holding their son's gown as a photographer snapped their picture. Don Aprile began to descend the steps alone. He breathed in the air. It was a glorious day. And when his newly confirmed grandson came over to hug him, he patted his head affectionately and put a huge gold coin in the boy's palm—the traditional gift on a child's confirmation day. Then, with a generous hand, he reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a handful of smaller gold coins to give to the other boys and girls. He was gratified by their shouts of joy and indeed by being in the city itself, its tall gray stone buildings as sweet as the trees. He was quite alone. He looked down at the stone steps in front of him, then paused a moment as a huge black car pulled up as if to receive him.

The car stopped as the Don reached the last step. Stace jumped out of the backseat onto the street, the car between him and his target. In one quick move he rested his gun on the roof. He shot two-handed. He fired only twice.

The first bullet hit the Don square in the forehead. The second bullet tore out his throat. His blood spurted all over the sidewalk, showering yellow sunlight with pink drops.

At the same time Franky, on the sidewalk, fired a long burst of his Uzi over the heads of the crowd.

Then both men were back in the car and Heskow screeched down the avenue. Minutes later they were driving

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through the tunnel and then on to the airport, where a private jet took them aboard.

•

At the sound of the first shot, Valerius hurled his son and wife to the ground and covered them with his body. He actually saw nothing that happened. Neither did Nicole, who stared at her father with astonishment. Marcantonio looked down in disbelief.

But Astorre had been alert as soon as the black sedan stopped. He saw Stace fire his gun and thought the left hand pulled the trigger. He saw Franky fire the Uzi, and that was definitely left-handed. He caught a fleeting glance at the driver, a round-headed man, obviously heavy. The two shooters moved with the grace of well-conditioned athletes. As Astorre dropped to the sidewalk, he had reached out to pull the Don down with him, but he was a fraction of a second too late. And now he was covered with the Don's blood.

Then he saw the children move like a whirlwind of terror, a huge red dot at the center of it. They were screaming. He saw the Don splayed over the steps as if death had disjointed his skeleton. And he felt an enormous dread of what it all would do to his life and the lives of those dearest to him.

•

For five months after the Don's death, Astorre was busy conferring with some of the Don's old retired colleagues, taking measures to protect the Don's children from harm and investigating the circumstances of his murder. Most of all, he had to find a reason for such a daring and outrageous act. Who would give the order to kill the great Don Aprile? He knew he had to be very careful.

Astorre had his first meeting with Benito Craxxi in Chicago.

Craxxi had retired from all illegal operations at 60, ten years before the Don. He was the man who had been the great consiglieri of the National Mafia Commission and had an intimate knowledge of all the Family structures in the United States. He had been the first to spot the decay in the power of the great Families, foreseeing their decline. And so he had prudently retired to play the stock market, where he was pleasantly surprised that he could steal money with no risk of legal punishment whatsoever. The Don had given Craxxi's name to Astorre as one of the men he must consult, if necessary.

It was a breakfast meeting. There were bowls of fruit—glossy yellow pears, russet apples, a bowl of strawberries almost as large as lemons, white grapes, and dark-red cherries. A huge crag of cheese was laid out on a wooden board like a sliver of gold-coated rock. The housekeeper served them coffee and anisette and disappeared.

"So, my young man," Craxxi said, "you were at the scene. Describe everything to me."

Astorre did so.

"And you are certain that both shooters were left-handed?" Craxxi asked.

"At least one, and probably the other," Astorre said.

Craxxi nodded slowly and seemed lost in thought. After what seemed long moments, he looked directly at Astorre and said, "I think I know who the shooters were. But not to be hasty. It is more important to know who hired them and why. You must be very careful.

"Now, here is my thought about the shooters. They are brothers who live in Los Angeles, and they are the most highly qualified men in the country. They never talk. Few people even know they are twins. And they are both left-handed. They have courage, and they are born fighters. The danger would appeal to them, and the reward must have been great. Also, they must have had some reassurances—that the authorities would not pursue the case with conviction. I find it strange that there was no official police or federal surveillance of the confirmation at the cathedral. After all, Don Aprile was still an FBI target, even after he retired.

"Now understand, everything I've said is theory. You will have to investigate and confirm. And then, if I am correct, you must strike with all your might."

"One thing more," Astorre said. "Are the Don's children in danger?"

Craxxi shrugged. He was carefully peeling the skin off a golden pear. "I don't know," he said. "But you shouldn't be too proud to ask them for help.

"At my brother's camp, they're smoking Cuban cigars and drinking martinis."

You yourself are undoubtedly in some peril."

•

Franky and Stace Sturzo owned a huge sporting-goods store in LA and a house in Santa Monica that was only five minutes from the Malibu beach. Each of them had been married once, but their marriages didn't take, so now they lived together.

They never told any of their friends they were twins, and it was not really that obvious they were brothers except that they had the same easygoing confidence and extraordinary athletic suppleness. Franky was the more charming and temperamental. Stace was the more levelheaded, just a little stolid, but they were both noted for their amiability.

They belonged to one of the large, classy gyms that dotted LA, a gym filled with digital bodybuilding machines and wide-screen wall TVs to watch while working out. It had a basketball court, a swimming pool and even a boxing ring. Its staff of trainers was good-looking, sculptured men and pretty, well-toned women. The brothers used the gym to work out and also to meet women who trained there. It was a great hunting ground for men, full of hopeful actresses trying to keep their bodies beautiful, and the bored, neglected wives of high-powered movie people.

But mostly, Franky and Stace enjoyed pickup basketball games. Good players came to the gym—sometimes even a reserve on the LA Lakers. Franky and Stace had played against him and felt they had held their own. It brought back fond memories of when they had been high school all-stars. But they had no illusions that in a real game they would have been so fortunate. They had played all-out, and the Laker guy had just been having a good time.

In the gym's health-food restaurant, they struck up friendships with female trainers and gym members and sometimes even a celebrity. They always had a good time, but it was a small part of their lives. Franky coached the local grade school basketball team, a job he took seriously. He always hoped to discover a superstar in the making, and he radiated a stern amiability that made the kids love him. He had a favorite coaching tactic. "OK," he would say, "you're 20 points down, it's the last quarter. You come out and score the first ten points. Now you got them where you want them—you can win. It's just nerve and confidence. You can always win. You're ten points down, then five, then you're even. And you've got them!"

Of course, it never worked. The kids were not developed enough physically or tough enough mentally. They were just kids. But Franky knew the really talented ones would never forget the lesson and that it would help them later on.

Stace concentrated on running the store, and he made the final decision on which hit-jobs they would take. There had to be minimum risk and maximum price. Stace believed in percentages all the way and also had a gloomy temperament. What the brothers had going for them was that they rarely disagreed on anything. They had the same tastes and they were almost always evenly matched in terms of physical skills. They sometimes sparred against each other in the boxing ring or played each other one-on-one on the basketball court.

They were now 43 years old and their lives suited them, but they often talked about getting married again and having families. Franky kept a mistress in San Francisco, and Stace had a girlfriend in Vegas, a showgirl. Both women had shown no inclination for marriage, and the brothers felt they were just treading water, hoping for someone to show up.

Since they were so genial, they made friends easily and had a busy social life. Still, they spent the year after killing the Don with some apprehension. A man like the Don could not be killed without some danger.

In November, Stace made the necessary call to Heskow about picking up the second 500 grand of the payment. The phone call was brief and seemingly ambiguous.

"Hi," Stace said. "We're coming in a month from now. Everything OK?"

Heskow seemed glad to hear from him. "Everything's perfect," he said. "Everything's ready. Could you be more specific on time? I don't want you coming when I'm out of town somewhere."

Stace laughed and said casually, "We'll find you, OK? Figure a month." Then he hung up.

The money pickup, in a deal like this, always had an element of danger. Sometimes people hated to pay up for something already done. That happened in every business. Then sometimes people had delusions of grandeur. They thought they were as good as the professionals. The danger was minimal with Heskow—he had always been a reliable broker. But the Don's case was special, as was the money. So they didn't want Heskow to have a fix on their plans.

The brothers had taken up tennis the past year, but it was the one sport that defeated them. They were so athletically gifted that they could not accept this defeat, though it was explained to them that tennis was a sport where you had to acquire the strokes early in life by instruction, that it really depended on certain mechanics, like learning a language. So they had made arrangements to stay for three weeks at a tennis ranch in Scottsdale, Arizona, for an introductory course. From there they would travel to New York to meet Heskow. Of course, during these weeks at the tennis ranch they could pass some of their evenings in

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•

The tennis ranch was luxurious. Stace and Franky were given a two-bedroom cottage with air-conditioning, an Indian-motif dining room, a balconied living room and a small kitchen. They had a superb view of the mountains. There was a built-in bar, a big refrigerator and a huge TV.

But the three weeks started off on a sour note. One of the instructors gave Franky a hard time. Franky was easily the best in the group of beginners, and he was especially proud of his serve, which was completely unorthodox and wild. But the instructor, a man by the name of Leslie, seemed particularly irritated by it.

One morning Franky hit the ball to his opponent, who couldn't come near it, and he said proudly to Leslie, "That's an ace, right?"

"That's a foot fault," Leslie said slowly. "And that serve is a bullshit serve. Just get the ball in. You're a very decent player for a hacker. Play the point."

Franky was annoyed but controlled himself. "Match me up with somebody who's not a hacker," he said. "Let's see how I do." He paused. "How about you?"

Leslie looked at him with disgust. "I don't play matches with hackers," he said. He pointed to a young woman in her late 20s or early 30s. "Rosie?" he said. "Give Mr. Sturzo a one-set match."

The girl had just come to the court. She had beautiful tanned legs coming out of white shorts, and she wore a pink shirt with the tennis-ranch logo. She had a mischievous, pretty face, and her hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

"You have to give me a handicap," Frank said disarmingly. "You look too good. Are you an instructor?"

"No," Rosie said. "I'm just here to get some serving lessons. Leslie is a champ trainer for that."

"Give him a handicap," Leslie said. "He's way below you in the levels."

Franky said quickly, "How about two games in each four-game set?" He would bargain down to less.

Rosie gave him her quick, infectious smile. "No," she said, "that won't do you any good. What you should ask for is two points in each game. Then you would have a chance. And if we get to deuce, I have to win by four instead of two."

Franky shook her hand. "Let's go," he said. They were standing close together, and he could smell the sweetness of her body. She whispered, "Do you want me to throw the match?"

Franky was thrilled. "No," he said. "You can't beat me with that handicap."

They played with Leslie watching, and he didn't call the foot faults. Franky won the first two games, but after that Rosie rolled over him. Her ground strokes were perfect, and she had no trouble at all with his serve. She was always standing where Franky had to hit the ball, and though several times he got to deuce, she put him away 6–2.

"Hey, you're good for a hacker," Rosie said. "But you didn't start playing until you were over 20, right?"

"Right." Franky was beginning to hate the word hacker.

"You have to learn the strokes and serve when you're a kid," she said.

"Is that right?" Franky teased. "But I'll beat you before we leave here."

Rosie grinned. She had a wide, generous mouth for such a small face. "Sure," she said. "If you have the best day of your life and I have the worst." Franky laughed.

Stace came up and introduced himself. Then he said, "Why don't you have dinner with us tonight? Franky won't invite you because you beat him, but he'll come."

"Ah, that's not true," Rosie said. "He was just about to ask me. Is eight o'clock all right?"

"Great," Stace said, slapping Franky with his racquet.

"I'll be there," Franky said.

They had dinner at the ranch restaurant, a huge vaulted room with glass walls that let in the desert and mountains. Rosie proved to be a find, as Franky told Stace later. She flirted with both of them, she talked all the sports and knew her stuff, past and present—the great championship games, the great players, the great moments. And she was a good listener; she drew them out. Franky even told her about coaching the kids and how his store provided them with the best equipment, and Rosie said warmly, "Hey, that's great, that's just great." Then they told her they'd been high school basketball all-stars.

Rosie also had a good appetite, which they approved of in a woman. She ate slowly and daintily, and she had a trick of lowering her head and tilting it to the side with an almost mock shyness when she talked about herself. She was studying for a Ph.D. in psychology at NYU. She came from a moderately wealthy family, and she had already toured Europe. She had been a tennis star in high school. But she said all this with a self-deprecating air that charmed them, and she kept touching their hands to maintain contact with them as she spoke.

"I still don't know what to do when I graduate," she said. "With all my book knowledge, I can never figure people out in real life. Like you two guys. You tell me your history, you are two charming bastards, but I have no idea what makes you tick."

"Don't worry about that," Stace said. "What you see is what you get."

"Don't ask me," Franky said to her. "Right now my whole life is centered on how to beat you at tennis."

After dinner the two brothers walked Rosie down the red clay path to her cottage. She gave them each a quick kiss on

"I think Bob is cheating on me. Last night while making love, he called me by his lawyer's name."

the cheek, and they were left alone in the desert air. The last image they took with them was Rosie's pert face gleaming in the moonlight.

"I think she's exceptional," Stace said.

"Better than that," Franky said.

•

For the rest of Rosie's two weeks at the ranch, she became their buddy. In late afternoons after tennis they went golfing together. She was good, but not as good as the brothers. They could really whack the ball far out and had nerves of steel on the putting green. A middle-aged guy at the tennis ranch went with them to the golf course to make a foursome and insisted on being partnered with Rosie and playing for ten dollars a hole, and though he was good, he lost. Then he tried to join them for dinner that night at the tennis ranch. Rosie rebuffed him, to the delight of the twins. "I'm trying to get one of these guys to propose to me," she said.

It was Stace who got Rosie to bed by the end of the first week. Franky had gone down to Vegas for the evening to gamble and to give Stace a clear shot. When he returned at midnight, Stace wasn't in the room. The next morning when he appeared Franky asked him, "How was she?"

"Exceptional," Stace said.

This was unusual. They had never shared a woman; it was one area where their tastes differed. Stace thought it over. Rosie fitted in perfectly with both of them. But the three couldn't keep hanging out together if Stace was getting Rosie and Franky was not. Unless Franky brought another girl into the combo—and that would spoil it.

"It's OK," Stace said.

So the next night Stace went down to Vegas and Franky took his shot with Rosie. She made no trouble at all and was delightful in bed—no fancy tricks, just good-hearted fun and games. She didn't seem to be uncomfortable at all about it.

But the next day when the three of them had breakfast, Franky and Stace didn't know quite how to act. They were a little too formal and polite. Deferential. Their perfect harmony was gone. Rosie polished off her eggs and bacon and toast and then leaned back and said with amusement, "Am I going to have trouble with you two guys? I thought we were buddies."

Stace said sincerely, "It's just that we're both crazy about you, and we don't know exactly how to handle this."

Rosie said, laughing, "I'll handle it. I like you both a lot. We're having a good time. We're not getting married, and after we leave the tennis ranch, we'll probably never see each other again. I'll go back to New York, and you guys will go back to LA. So let's not spoil it now unless one of you is the jealous type. Then

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we can just cut out the sex part."

The twins were suddenly at ease with her. "Fat chance," Stace said.

Franky said, "We're not jealous, and I'm going to beat you at tennis one time before we leave."

"You haven't got the strokes," Rosie said firmly, but she reached out and clasped both their hands.

"Let's settle it today," Franky said.

Rosie tilted her head shyly. "I'll give you three points a game," she said. "And if you lose, you won't give me any more of that macho crap."

Stace said, "I'll put 100 bucks on Rosie."

Franky smiled wolfishly at both of them. There was no way he would let himself lose to Rosie with a three-point handicap. He said to Stace, "Make that bet five."

Rosie had a mischievous smile on her face. "And if I win, Stace gets tonight with me."

Both brothers laughed aloud. It gave them pleasure that Rosie was not that perfect, that she had a touch of malice in her.

Out on the tennis court, nothing could save Franky—not his whirlwind serve, not his acrobatic returns or the three-point spot. Rosie had a topspin she had never used before and completely baffled Franky. She zipped him 6–0. When the set was over, Rosie gave Franky a kiss on the cheek and whispered, "I'll make it up to you tomorrow night." As promised, she slept with Stace after the three of them had dinner. This alternated for the rest of the week.

The twins drove Rosie to the airport the day she left. "Remember, if you ever get to New York, give me a ring," she said. They had already given her an open invitation to stay with them any time she came to LA. Then she surprised them. She held out two small gift-wrapped boxes. "Presents," she said, and smiled happily. The twins opened the boxes, and each found a Navajo ring with a blue stone. "To remember me by."

Later, when the brothers went shopping in town, they saw the rings on sale for 300 bucks.

"She could have bought us a tie each or one of those funny cowboy belts for 50 bucks," Franky said. They were extraordinarily pleased.

They had another week to spend at the ranch, but they spent little of it playing tennis. They golfed and flew to Vegas in the evenings. But they made it a rule not to spend the night there. That's how you could lose big—take a shellacking in the early-morning hours when your energy was down and your judgment was impaired.

Over dinner they talked about Rosie. Neither would say a disloyal word about her, though in their hearts they held her in lower esteem because she had fucked both of them.

"She really enjoyed it," Franky said. "She never got mean or moody after."

"Yeah," Stace said. "She was exceptional. I think we found the perfect broad."

"But they always change," Franky said.

"Do we call her when we get to New York?" Stace asked.

"I will," Franky said.

•

A week after they left Scottsdale they registered at the Sherry-Netherland in Manhattan. The next morning they rented a car and drove out to John Heskow's house on Long Island. When they pulled into the driveway, they saw Heskow sweeping his basketball court clean of a thin skin of snow. He raised his hand in welcome. Then he motioned them to pull into the garage attached to the house. His own car was parked outside. Franky jumped out of the car before Stace pulled in, to shake Heskow's hand but really to put him in close range if anything happened.

Heskow unlocked the door and ushered them inside.

"It's all ready," he said. He led them upstairs to the huge trunk in the bedroom and unlocked it. Inside were stacks of money rubber-banded into six-inch bundles, along with a folded leather bag, almost as big as a suitcase. Stace threw the bundles onto the bed. Then the brothers rifled through each stack to make sure they were all hundreds and that there were no counterfeits. They counted the bills in one stack and multiplied it by 100. Then they loaded the money into the leather bag. When they were finished, they looked up at Heskow. He was smiling. "Have a cup of coffee before you go," he said. "Take a leak or whatever."

"Thanks," Stace said. "Is there anything we should know? Any fuss?"

"None at all," Heskow said. "Everything's perfect. Just don't be too flashy with the dough."

"It's for our old age," Franky said, and the brothers laughed.

"What about all his friends?" Stace asked.

"The dead have no friends," Heskow said.

"What about his kids?" Franky asked. "They didn't make any noise?"

"They were brought up straight," Heskow said. "They're not Sicilians. They are very successful professionals. They believe in the law. And they're lucky they're not suspects."

The brothers laughed and Heskow smiled. It was a good joke.

"I'm just amazed," Stace said. "Such a big man and so little fuss."

"Well, it's been a year now and not a peep."

The brothers finished their coffee and shook hands with Heskow. "Keep well," Heskow said. "I may be calling you again."

"You do that," Franky said.

•

Back in the city the brothers dumped the money into a joint-security safe-deposit box. Actually, two. They didn't

"Suppose a large nuclear device leveled central Europe. Which stock would do well?"

even dip in for any casual spending money. Then they went back to the hotel and called Rosie.

She was surprised and delighted to hear from them so soon. Her voice was eager as she urged them to come to her apartment at once. She would show them New York—her treat. So that evening they arrived at her apartment and she served them drinks before they all left for dinner and the theater.

Rosie took them to Le Cirque, which she told them was the finest restaurant in New York. The food was great, and even though it was not on the menu, at Franky's request they cooked him a plate of spaghetti that was the best he'd ever tasted. The twins could not get over the fact that a fancy restaurant could serve food they liked so much. They also noted that the maître d' treated Rosie in a very special way, and that impressed them. They had their usual good time, Rosie urging them to tell stories. She looked especially beautiful. It was the first time they had seen her dressed formally.

Over coffee, the brothers gave Rosie their present. They had bought it at Tiffany's that afternoon and had it wrapped in a maroon velvet box. It had cost five grand, a simple gold chain with a diamond-encrusted locket of white platinum.

"From me and Stace," Franky said. "We chipped in."

Rosie was stunned. Her eyes became watery and gleaming. She put the chain over her head so that the locket rested between her breasts. Then she leaned over and kissed both of them. It was a simple sweet kiss on the lips that tasted of honey.

•

The brothers had once told Rosie they had never gone to a Broadway musical, so the next night she was taking them to see *Les Misérables*. She promised them they would love it. And they did, but with a few reservations. Later, in her apartment, Franky said, "I don't believe he didn't kill the cop Javert when he had the chance."

"It's a musical," Stace said. "Musicals don't make sense even in the movies."

But Rosie disputed this. "It shows Jean Valjean has become a really good man," she said. "It's about redemption. A man who sins and steals and then reconciles with society."

This irritated even Stace. "Wait a minute," he said. "The guy started off a thief. Once a thief, always a thief. Right, Franky?"

Now Rosie took fire. "What would you two guys know about a man like Valjean?" And that broke the brothers up. Rosie smiled her good-natured smile. "Which of you is staying tonight?" she asked.

She waited for the answer and finally said, "I don't do threesomes. You have to take turns."

"Who do you want to stay?" Franky asked.

"Don't start that," Rosie warned, "or we'll have a beautiful relationship like in the movies. No screwing. And I'd hate that," she said, smiling to take the edge off. "I love you both."

"I'll go home tonight," Franky said. He wanted her to know she didn't have power over him.

Rosie kissed Franky goodnight and accompanied him to the door. She whispered, "I'll be special tomorrow night."

•

They had six days to spend together. Rosie had to work on her dissertation during the day, but she was available in the evenings.

One night the twins took her to a Knicks game at the Garden when the Lakers were in town, and they were delighted that she appreciated all the fine points of the game. Afterward, they went to a fancy deli and Rosie told them that the next day, the day before Christmas Eve, she had to leave town for the week. The brothers assumed she would spend Christmas with her family. But now they noticed that for the first time since they had known her, Rosie looked a little depressed.

"No, I'm spending Christmas alone in a house my family owns upstate. I wanted to duck all that phony Christmas stuff, to just study and sort out my life."

"So just cancel and spend Christmas with us," Franky said. "We'll change our flight back to LA."

"I can't," Rosie said. "I have to study, and that's the best place."

"All alone?" Stace asked.

Rosie ducked her head. "I'm such a dope," she said.

"Why don't we go up with you for just a few days?" Franky asked. "We'll leave the day after Christmas."

"Yeah," Stace said, "we could use some peace and quiet."

Rosie's face was glowing. "Would you really?" she said happily. "That's so great. We could go skiing on Christmas. There's a resort just 30 minutes from the house. And I'll cook a Christmas dinner." She paused for a moment and then said unconvincingly, "But promise you'll leave after Christmas; I really have to work."

"We have to get back to LA," Stace said. "We have a business to run."

"God, I love you guys," Rosie said.

Stace said casually, "Franky and me were talking. You know we've never been to Europe, and we thought when you're finished with school this summer, we could all go together. You be our guide. Top of the line in everything. Just a couple of weeks. We could have a great time if you were with us."

"Yeah," Franky said. "We can't go

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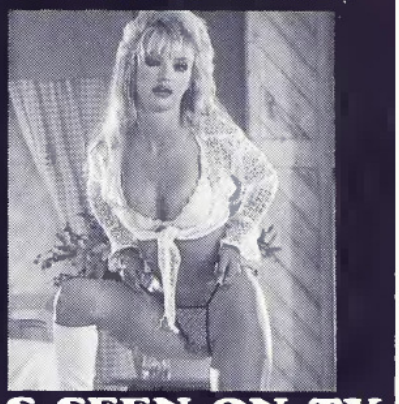

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alone." They all laughed.

"That is a wonderful idea," Rosie said. "I'll show you London and Paris and Rome. And you will absolutely adore Venice. You may never leave. But hell, summer is a long time away, you guys. I know you, you'll be chasing other women by then."

"We want you," Franky said almost angrily.

"I'll be ready when I get the call," Rosie said.

•

On the morning of December 23rd Rosie pulled up to the hotel to pick up the twins. She was driving a huge Cadillac whose trunk held her big suitcases and a few gaily wrapped presents and still had room for their more modest ones.

Stace took the backseat and let Franky ride up front with Rosie. The radio was playing, and none of them talked for about an hour. That was what was great about Rosie.

While waiting for Rosie to pick them up, the brothers had had a conversation during breakfast. Stace could see Franky was uneasy with him, which was rare between the twins.

"Spit it out," Stace said.

"Don't take this wrong," Franky said. "I'm not jealous or anything. But could you lay off Rosie while we're up there?"

"Sure," Stace said. "I'll tell her I caught the clap in Vegas."

Franky grinned and said, "You don't have to go that far. I'd just like to try having her for myself. Otherwise, I'll lay off and you can have her."

"You're a jerk," Stace said. "You'll ruin everything. Look, we didn't muscle her, we didn't con her. This is what she wants to do. And I think it's great for us."

"I'd just like to give it a try by myself," Franky said again. "Just for a little while."

"Sure," Stace said. "I'm the older brother, I have to watch out for you." It was their favorite joke, and indeed it always did seem Stace was a few years older than Franky instead of ten minutes.

"But you know she'll be wise to you in two seconds," Stace said. "Rosie is smart. She'll know you're in love with her."

Franky looked at his brother with astonishment. "I'm in love with her?" he said. "Is that it? Jesus fucking Christ." And they both laughed.

•

Now the car was out of the city and rolling through the farmland of Westchester County. Franky broke the silence. "I never saw so much snow in my life," he said. "How the hell can people live here?"

"Because it's cheap," Rosie said.

Stace asked, "How much longer?"

"About an hour and a half," Rosie said. "You guys need to stop?"

"No," Franky said, "let's get there."

"Unless you have to stop," Stace said to Rosie.

Rosie shook her head. She looked very determined, hands tight on the wheel, peering intently at the slow-falling snowflakes.

About an hour later, they passed through a small town and Rosie said, "Just another 15 minutes."

The car went up a steep incline, and on top of a small hill was a house, gray as an elephant, surrounded by snow-covered fields, the snow absolutely pure white and unmarked, no footprints, no car tracks.

Rosie pulled to a stop at the front porch entrance, and they got out. She loaded them down with suitcases and the Christmas boxes. "Go on in," she said. "The door is open. We don't lock up out here."

Franky and Stace crunched up the steps of the porch and opened the door. They walked into a huge living room decorated with animal heads on the walls, and there was a fire in a hearth as big as a cave.

Outside, suddenly, they could hear the roar of the Cadillac's motor, and at that moment six men appeared from the two entryways of the house. They were holding guns, and the leader, a huge man with a great mustache, said in a slightly accented voice, "Don't move. Don't drop the packages." Then the guns were pressed against their bodies.

Stace understood at once, but Franky was worried about Rosie. It took him about 30 seconds to put it together—the roar of the engine and Rosie not being there. Then, with the worst feeling he had ever had in his life, he realized the truth. Rosie was bait.

•

Astorre reached the safe house at three in the morning in a landscape ghostly white, snow in huge drifts.

Inside, the Sturzo twins were handcuffed, their feet shackled and special restraining jackets fitted onto their bodies. They were lying on the floor of one bedroom, guarded by two armed men.

Astorre regarded them with sympathy. "It's a compliment," he told them. "We appreciate how dangerous you are."

The two brothers were completely different in their attitudes. Stace seemed calm, resigned, but Franky glared at them with hatred that transfigured his face from its usual amiable look into a gargoyle.

Astorre sat on the bed. "I guess you guys have figured it out," he said.

Stace said quietly, "Rosie was bait. She was very good, right, Franky?"

"Exceptional," Franky said. He was trying to keep his voice from ranging hysterically high.

"That's because she really liked you

guys," Astorre said. "She was crazy about you, especially Franky. It was tough for her. Very tough."

Franky said contemptuously, "Then why did she do it?"

"Because I gave her a lot of money," Astorre said. "Really a lot of money. You know how that is, Franky."

"No, I don't," Franky said.

"I figure it took a big price for two smart guys like you to take the contract on the Don," Astorre said. "A million? Two million?"

Stace said, "You have it wrong. We had no part in that. We're not that stupid."

Astorre said, "I know you're the shooters. You have a rep for having big balls. Plus, I checked you out. Now, what I want from you is the name of the broker."

"You're wrong," Stace said. "There is no way you can put that on us. And who the hell are you, anyway?"

"I'm the Don's nephew," Astorre said. "His sweeper-upper. And I've been checking you guys out for nearly six months. At the time of the shooting, you weren't in LA. You didn't show for over a week. Franky, you missed two games coaching the kids. Stace, you never dropped in to see how the store ran. You never even called. So just tell me where you were."

"I was in Vegas gambling," Franky said. "And we could talk better if you took off some of these restraints. We're not fucking Houdinis."

Astorre gave him a sympathetic smile. "In a bit," he said. "Stace, how about you?"

"I was up with my girlfriend in Tahoe," Stace said. "But who the hell can remember?"

Astorre said, "Maybe I'll have better luck talking to you separately."

He left them and went down to the kitchen, where Monza had coffee waiting for him. He told Monza to put the brothers into different bedrooms and keep two guards with each man at all times. Monza was working with a six-man team.

"Are you sure you have the right fellows?" Monza said.

"I think so," Astorre said. "If not them, it's just their bad luck. I hate to ask you, Aldo, but you may have to help them talk."

"Well, they don't always talk," Monza said. "It's hard to believe, but people are willful. And these two look very hard to me."

"I just hate to go that low," Astorre said.

He waited an hour before going up to the room where Franky was. Night had fallen, but reflected in the lamplight outside he could see snowflakes swirling slowly down. He found Franky on the floor in full restraints.

"It's very simple," Astorre said to him. "Give us the name of the broker, and you may get out of here alive."

Franky looked at him with hatred. "I'll never fucking tell you anything, asshole. You got the wrong guys. And I'll remember your face and I'll remember Rosie."

"That's absolutely the wrong thing to say," Astorre told him.

"Were you fucking her, too?" Franky said. "You're a pimp?"

Astorre understood. Franky would never forgive the betrayal by Rosie. What a frivolous response to a serious situation.

"I think you're being stupid," Astorre said. "And you guys have a rep for being smart."

"I don't give a flying fuck what you think," Franky said. "You can't do anything if you have no proof."

"Really? So I'm wasting my time with you," Astorre said. "I'll go talk with Stace."

Astorre went down to the kitchen for more coffee before he went up to see Stace. He pondered the fact that Franky could look so confident and speak so brashly while under such strict constraints. Well, he would have to do better with Stace. He found the man propped up uncomfortably in bed.

"Take his jacket off," Astorre said. "But check his cuffs and shackles."

"I figured it out," Stace said to him calmly. "You know we have a stash. I can arrange for you to pick it up and end this nonsense."

"I just had a talk with Franky," Astorre said. "I was disappointed in him. You and your brother are supposed to be smart guys. Now you talk to me about money, and you know this is about you hitting the Don."

"You have it wrong," Stace said.

Astorre said gently, "I know you weren't in San Francisco and I know Franky wasn't in Vegas. You are the only two freelancers who had the balls to take the job. And the shooters were lefties like you and Franky. So all I want to know is, who was your broker?"

"Why should I tell you?" Stace said. "I know the story is over. You guys didn't wear masks, you exposed Rosie, so you are not going to let us out of here alive. No matter what you promise."

Astorre sighed. "I won't try to con you. That's about it. But you have one thing you can bargain for. Easy or hard. I have a very qualified man with me, and I'm going to put him to work on Franky." As he said this, Astorre felt a queasiness in his stomach. He remembered Aldo Monza's past work. Monza was brutal.

"You're wasting your time," Stace said. "Franky won't talk."

"Maybe not," Astorre said. "But he'll be taken apart piece by piece, and each piece will be brought to you to check. I figure you to talk to save him from that. But why even start down that road? And Stace, why would you want to protect that broker? He was supposed to cover

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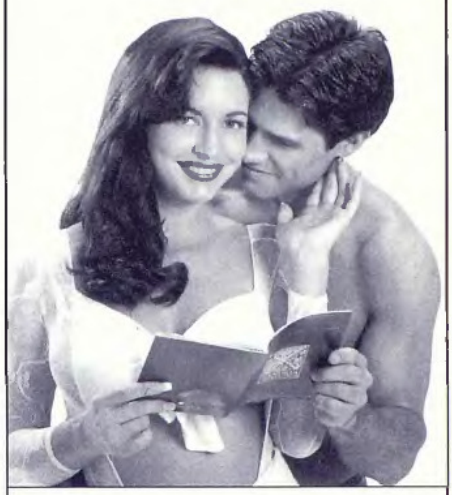

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you, and he didn't."

Stace didn't answer. Then he said, "Why don't you let Franky go?"

Astorre said, "You know better than that."

"How do you know I won't lie to you?" Stace said.

"Why the hell should you?" Astorre said. "What do you gain? Stace, you can keep Franky from going through something really terrible. You have to see it clear."

"We were just shooters, doing a job," Stace said. "The guy higher up is the one you want. Why can't you just let us go?"

Astorre was patient. "Stace, you and your brother took the job of killing a great man. Big price, big ego thing. Come on. It boosted you. You guys took your shot and lost, and now you have to pay or else the whole world is on a tilt. It has to be. Now, all you have is the choice, easy or hard. In an hour from now you can be looking at a very important piece of Franky on that table. Believe me, I don't want to do that, I really don't."

Stace said, "How do I know you're not full of shit?"

Astorre said, "Think, Stace. Think how I set you up with Rosie. A lot of time and patience. Think. I got you to this place and have seven armed men. A lot of expenses and a lot of trouble. And just before Christmas Eve. I'm a very serious fellow, Stace, you can see that. I'll give you an hour to think it over. I promise if you talk, Franky will never know it's coming."

•

Astorre went down to the kitchen again. Monza was waiting for him.

"So?" Monza said.

"I don't know," Astorre said. "But I have to be at a Christmas Eve party tomorrow, so we have to end this tonight."

"It won't take me over an hour," Monza said. "He'll either talk or be dead."

•

Astorre relaxed by the roaring fire for a short time and then went upstairs to see Stace. The man looked weary and resigned. He had thought it over. He knew that Franky would never talk—Franky thought there was still hope. Stace believed Astorre had put all the cards on the table. And now Stace comprehended the fears of all the men he killed, their last despairing and fruitless hopes for some fate to save them. Against all probabilities. And he didn't want Franky to die like that, piece by piece. He studied Astorre's face. It was stern, implacable despite his youth. He had the gravity of a high judge.

The heavy snow was coating the windowpanes like white fur. Franky, in his room, was daydreaming about being in Europe with Rosie, the snow coating the Paris boulevards, falling into the canals of Venice. The snow like magic. Rome like magic.

Stace lay on his bed worrying about Franky. They had taken the shot and lost. And it was the end of the story. But he could help Franky think they were only 20 points down.

"I'm OK with it now," Stace said. "Make sure Franky doesn't know what's happening, OK?"

"I promise," Astorre said. "But I'll know if you're lying."

"No," Stace said. "What's the point? The broker is a guy named Heskow, and he lives in a town called Brightwaters, just past Babylon. He's divorced, lives alone, and has a 16-year-old humongous kid who's a terrific basketball player. Heskow's hired us for some jobs over the years. We go back to when we were kids. The price was a million, but still me and Franky were leery about taking it. Too big a hit. We took it because he said we didn't have to worry about the FBI and we didn't have to worry about the police. That it was a great big fix. He also told us that the Don no longer had any juice connections. But he was obviously wrong on that. You're here. It was just too big a payday to turn down."

"That's a lot of info to give a guy you think is full of shit," Astorre said.

"I want to convince you I'm telling the truth," Stace said. "I figured it out. The story is over. I don't want Franky to know it."

"Don't worry," Astorre said. "I believe you."

He left the room and went down to the kitchen to give Monza his instructions. He wanted their IDs—licenses, credit cards, etc. He kept his word to Stace: Franky was to be shot in the back of the head without any warning. And Stace was to be executed without pain.

Astorre left to drive back to New York. The snow had turned to rain, and it rinsed the countryside of snow.

•

It was rare that Monza disregarded an order, but as the executioner he felt he had the right to protect himself and his men. There would be no guns. He would use rope.

First he took four guards to help him strangle Stace. The man didn't even try to resist. But with Franky it was different. For 20 minutes he tried to twist away from the rope. For a terrible 20 minutes Franky Sturzo knew he was being murdered.

Then the two bodies were wrapped in blankets and carried through the heavy glades as the rain changed back into snow. They were deposited in the forest behind the house. A hole in a very dense thicket was the hiding place, and they would not be discovered until spring, if ever. By that time the bodies would be so destroyed by nature that, Monza hoped, the cause of death could not be determined.

But it was not only for this practical reason that Monza had disobeyed his chief. For, like Don Aprile, he felt deeply that mercy for men could only come from God. He despised the idea of any other kind of mercy for men who hired themselves out as killers of other men. It was presumptuous for one man to forgive another. That was the duty of God. For men to pretend such mercy was an idle pride and a lack of respect. He did not desire any such mercy for himself.

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4 ex-girlfriends

(continued from page 116)

those guys who want to date as many women as possible and are scared to death of commitment. To the contrary, I'm the rare bachelor who prefers a regular relationship to random carpet dating. Yet my romantic interludes, no matter how sizzling they are at the outset, usually have the shelf life of a carton of milk. Worse yet, I miss *The Larry Sanders Show* more than I miss most of my former flames.

During the past few months, several events have forced me to take a good hard look at myself: first, the failure of my most recent attempt at a relationship; second, my ex-roommate's engagement, which makes me the final single guy in my peer group; and third, for the first time in memory, my mother did not write "maybe this will be the year you meet that special someone" on my birthday card. This was truly a blow—my own mother had given up on me and had most likely decided that her youngest son would spend the rest of his days playing cards and wearing hats and fishing, or whatever it is that aging heterosexual bachelors do. I knew that drastic measures were in order. I decided that this was not something I would be able to decipher on my own. Then it hit me—who could better analyze my exploits with the women I've dated than *the women I've dated*?

Within weeks, I had made final preparations for what would become known as the ex-girlfriend summit. Four carefully chosen girls with whom I have shared varying degrees of relationships had agreed to gather at my house on a Saturday night for dinner. Their mission: to pick apart my psyche and tell me what the hell I've been doing wrong all these years. I told them I intended to emerge from the evening with a remapped social blueprint, prepared to dive headfirst into deep and lasting future relationships.

The four-woman firing squad breaks down as follows (listed, by the way, in chronological order):

Lynn, a 31-year-old attorney, is the aforementioned college girlfriend. Although it has been over ten years since we stopped dating, we have remained close friends (sometimes I think we are close friends *because* we stopped dating). She has a quick wit, can sing and dance like a pro, and although she won't admit it, she is disarmingly beautiful, in a Teri Hatcher sort of way.

Diane, 31, is in advertising sales. We dated off and on during our postcollegiate early-to-mid-20s find-yourself years. She's smart, she's fun and she's always smiling. She has an endearing spirit that makes everyone fall for her right off the bat. She loves the outdoors, and is an accomplished athlete and a marathon runner. Diane and I shared pockets of romance while we were finding and building our careers, and we also remained good friends.

Nicole, 31, is a freelance artist (picture a younger, softer-featured Maria Shriver—sorry, Arnold). Nicole and I had a legitimate, adult-style relationship—with a clear-cut beginning, middle and end. With our similar career choices of artist and writer, we hit it off like gangbusters, and she led me into uncharted territory—such as hand-holding in restaurants. Nicole and I dated for several months before things fizzled out.

Maura, also 31, is in sales. Sharp and extremely quick, Maura is a better-looking version of *Caroline in the City*'s Lea Thompson. Maura and I started out as running buddies. Fifteen-mile runs would go by quickly with her, the conversations always spirited and hilarious. (It didn't hurt that she had no qualms about jumping into the hot tub afterward and splitting a bucket of beer.) Gradually, the evening workouts turned into dinners, concerts and other dating-style interludes. In the end, however, Maura and I were never quite sure if it was romance or friendship.

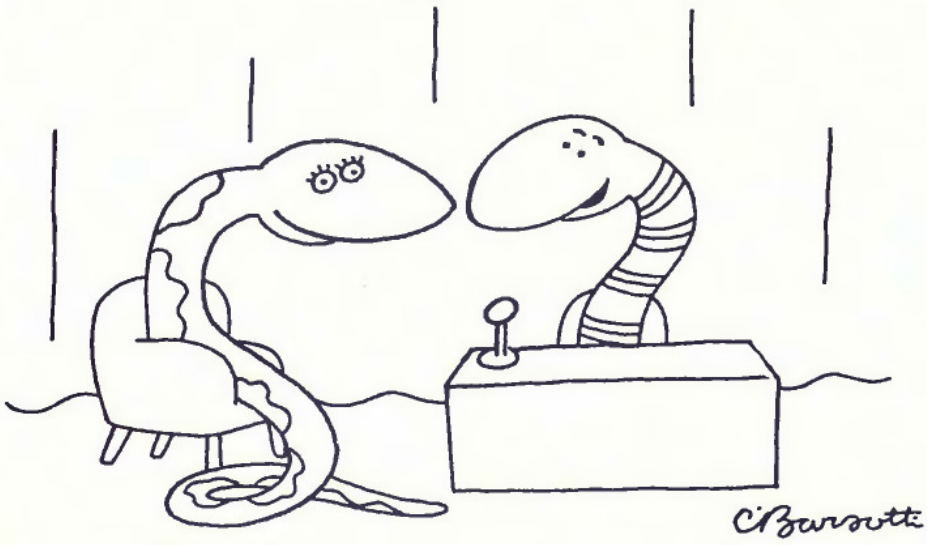
With this distinguished panel, there was a great buzz among my friends and family as the summit approached. My sister commented that "the fact that you could find four ex-girlfriends to agree to do this without being paid or tricked is so healthy I could vomit." She had no idea how prophetic that would be. To keep distractions and spying to a minimum, I decided to stage the event in the safety of my own dining room. To prepare my spartan bachelor pad, I splurged on three candles, five wineglasses and a dimmer switch for my 100-watt Home Depot ceiling fixture. The girls and I agreed that the libation would be red wine, which seems to have a knack for loosening up the vocal cords.

By eight o'clock on a crisp spring Saturday night, I found myself standing in my kitchen with all four of them. At first, there was a hint of awkwardness. I'm certain it was because this was perhaps the first time in history such a unique collection of human beings had gathered intentionally. As we small-talked, I felt strongly about delving into my collection of bargain-rack red wine. The first cork I mutilated was from a Beringer Merlot 1996. It was only then that I discovered my five new wineglasses can easily swallow an entire bottle of wine. Before I had taken the first sip from my glass, I had already opened bottle number two, also Beringer Merlot 1996. The girls and I raised our glasses and toasted the ex-girlfriend summit, which would bring success to all of my future relationships.

We adjourned to the dining room for gourmet pizza, and I took my seat at the head of the table, with two women on each side. Nicole said, "Should we get started?"

"I've lost my appetite," I said, looking at the half-eaten slice on my plate. "I think we've already started."

Bottle number three, Forest Glen Merlot 1997, ushered in the first topic of conversation, my interest in loud, black, winged sports cars. They all agreed that my fascination with these cartoonish vehicles is a bit juvenile, and that climbing out of them was sometimes embarrassing for them. When I asked what would be a more suitable choice of transportation, Diane suggested "an older BMW," which I realized is what her current boyfriend drives. The topic shifted quickly to my clothes, with particular attention to my footwear. "You wear old-man shoes," one of them said. In an attempt to defend myself, I removed one of my shoes and plopped it onto the table. "What's the matter with these?" I asked.



"I see you have some new skin since you were here last."

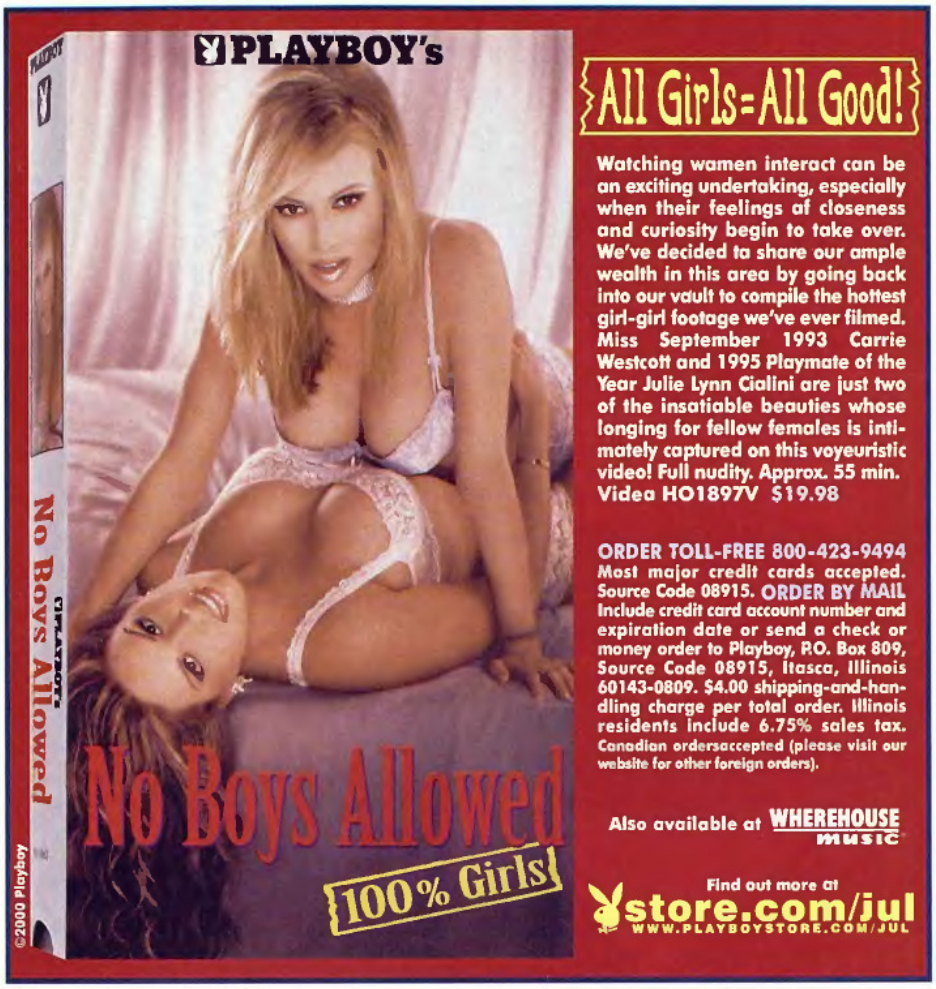
"My dad has a pair of those!" Lynn shrieked, and they all exploded with laughter.

An assault on my clothes was next. Three of them launched into a rapid-fire offensive that fell just short of suggesting that I wore tweed jackets and smoked a pipe. "Untuck your shirt and forget your belt once in a while," Maura suggested as she uncorked bottle number four, again Forest Glen Merlot 1997. The girls also agreed that I should change my toothbrushes more frequently and upgrade the toilet paper I buy.

The girls were apparently so loaded with ammunition on my shortcomings that one of them blurted out, "I need scrap paper!" Minutes later, they were all scrawling notes and giggling. As they scribbled, I resisted the urge to defend myself on each topic, realizing that the whole point of this exercise was for me to pick up some tips and apply them in the future. Besides, they were nitpicking anyway. "You guys keep firing away," I said calmly. "I'll just be over here drinking."

The girls ganged up on my hair for a while, agreeing that it was too manicured. (Maura and Nicole took matters into their own hands by rushing over and tousling it.) Then Diane said I was the first guy she had dated with chest hair, which segued into the more personal subject of back hair. Yes, I am one of those lucky few who are blessed with overactive follicles in the area south of the shoulders. The girls all claimed it didn't bother them, but I'm no dummy—women find it revolting, and so do I. In a fit of vanity I gave myself a 30th birthday gift of having it removed, every last stub. (Maura had no idea about any of this, having dated the smooth me.) Still, if electrolysis was the most prickly subject raised, I was beginning to think I would get off lightly. Then one of them said to Lynn, "How did you and Scott meet?" What followed was a start-to-finish recap by each one, as the others listened intently and took more notes. This seemed like an ideal time to break out bottle number five, Ecco Domani Merlot 1996.

For a good hour, they rehashed old stories of my dating and relationship prowess, often all speaking at once. Lynn's comments about my dating style in my late teens and early 20s provided a glimpse of just how far I'd come. She said that in college, my idea of culture was bleacher seats at Wrigley Field. She added that at coastal seafood restaurants, I'd order from the landlubbers menu, and at fine Italian establishments, I'd ask for "whatever's closest to spaghetti." "We spent a week in Europe and all he talked about was that the beer was warm and the *USA Today*'s baseball scores were three days old. He was addicted to Dr Pepper at the time, and when he finally found some at Harrods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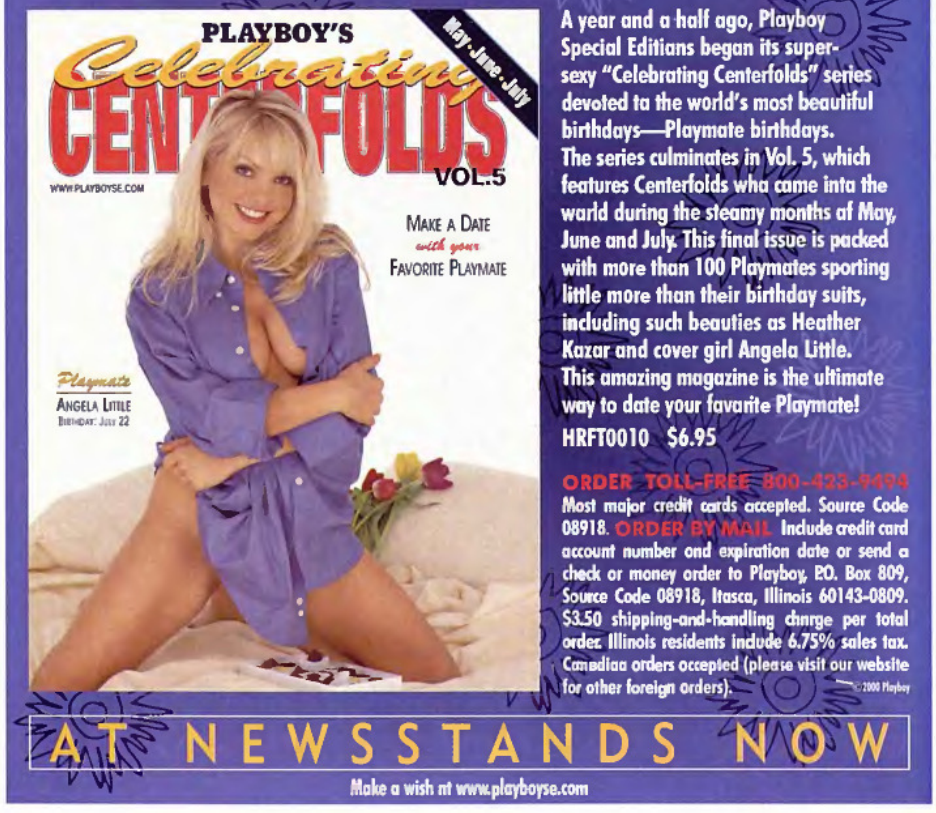
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in London, he bought two six-packs and dragged them through five countries."

Apparently, my dating skills improved with age, because the more recent girls had mostly good things to say about the places I took them to and my demeanor during such events. Lynn lamented that "he made me see John Mellencamp three times on the same tour, and that was when he was still Johnny Cougar." It suddenly became apparent that poor Lynn, sophisticated and mature beyond her years, used to date a postadolescent, beer-guzzling frat boy who still wore briefs. "What was it," I asked her, "that kept it going all those years?"

"You made me laugh," she said. "I've never laughed so hard in my life."

They all agreed that I was a perfect gentleman, and they admired the fact that, as a rule, my relationships never overlapped. I've been told I'm too nice, too accommodating and too much of a gentleman. Indeed, not one of them could recall having had a fight with me. "You were a pushover when we dated. Sometimes I'd practically beg you to tell me off. But you never did." Lynn recalled.

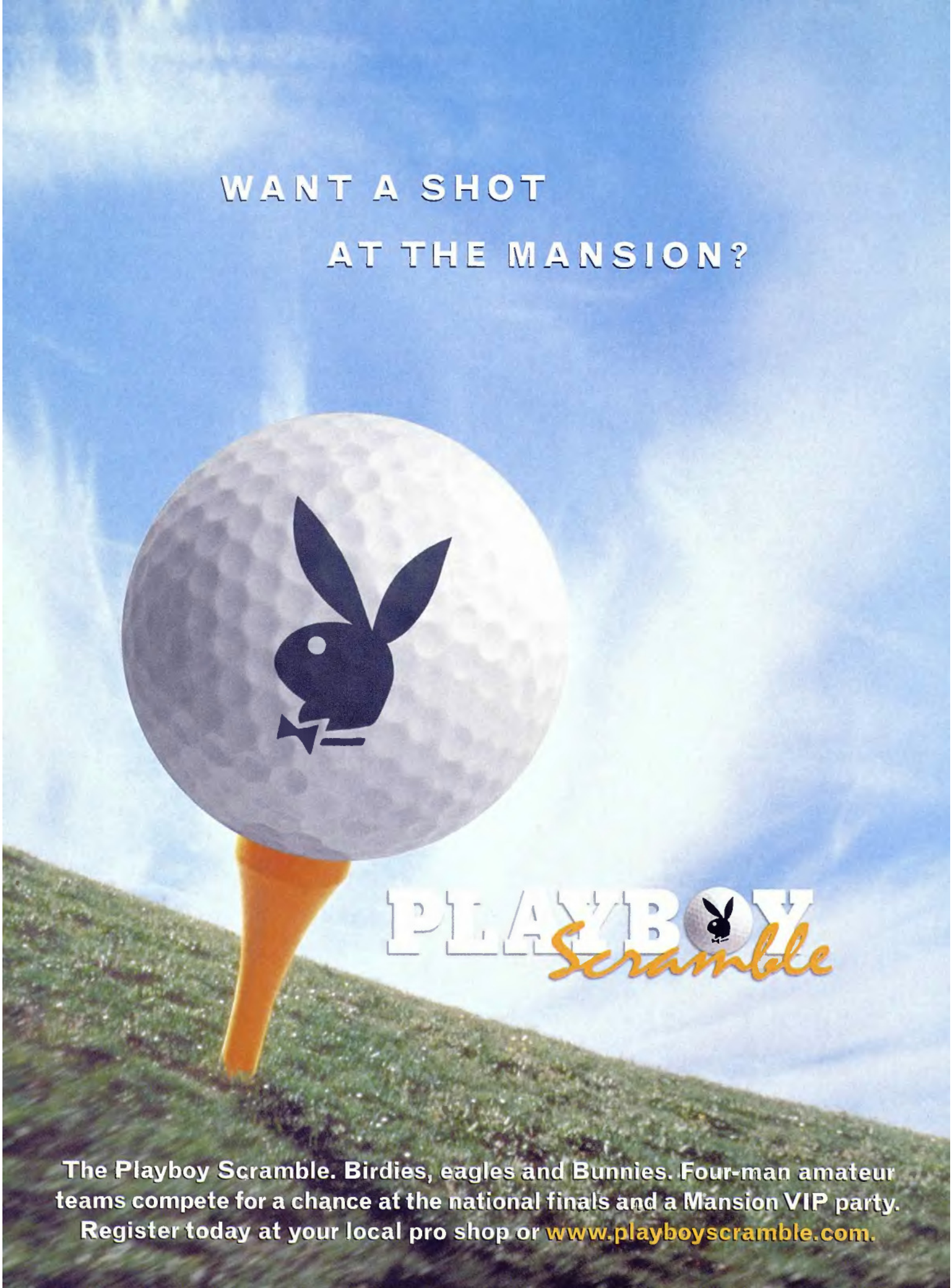
"You snapped at me once," Diane remembered, "but I deserved it."

"You know," I responded, "sometimes I think that, deep down, all girls want to be treated like shit."

"No! Don't believe it! It's not true!" they all shouted.

Then, out of the blue, Nicole chimed in with, "Do you remember that night when we went skinny-dipping in your mom's pool while listening to Christmas music?" Eyebrows lifted all around. I had wondered if this sort of thing would come up. (My mom had asked if sex would be one of the topics of conversation, to which I replied, "Well, *I'm* not going to bring it up.") All eyes were focused on me, waiting to hear about Nicole and me and Bing Crosby, naked in the swimming pool. Granted, she was referring to a harmless night. But I knew that as presiding judge of these proceedings, if I allowed skinny-dipping as evidence, it could pave the way for all kinds of tawdry business. "Yeah," I said, dumping the last of the Ecco into my glass, "I remember that night," and left it at that. I had put my finger in the dike, hoping against hope that I could hold back the flood by redirecting the conversation. "So, are you girls saying that I shouldn't even part my hair at all?"

Then, the levee burst. What ensued was a barrage of sexual machine-gun fire that had me frantically opening bottle number six, Round Hill Cabernet 1993. The sexual laundry list included the good: It came up that the small hands–small feet theory does not apply in my case (I actually found a scribbled rendering on one of their notes the next morning); the bad: I shed, leaving small, dark body hairs everywhere—on their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sheets, on their pillows, on them; and the ugly: I learned that I would be served by increasing the frequency of my oral visits to certain nethermost territories.

As I continued to guzzle, the girls continued to pick away at my romantic operations, taking my ego on a roller-coaster ride that left me dizzy and confused. One moment I was a "great kisser" and "affectionate," the next I was chastised for "not letting me grab your ass in public." Nicole liked that I was persistent in my pursuit, while Maura wondered if I was ever going to "bust a move and go after" her. The revelation of an office-desk interlude with one was offset by the news that nothing happened during a weekend reunion in Cancún with another. Apparently, fueled by that fascinating topic and by the fearlessness of my 33rd glass of wine, I blurted out:

"So, did any of you fake it?"

A long silence followed, with eyeballs shooting back and forth.

"Actually, don't answer that," I said.

No one did, but I was just coherent enough to decipher their smirks and sneaky glances.

"Yeah, well, I did, too," I said with a smile. Before things got completely out of hand, I summoned my final ounce of lucidity and posed perhaps the most important question of the night: What went wrong in our relationships?

"You were a grown-up to me. You were husband and father material, but at 23, that scared my socks off," Diane said.

Lynn added, "You were the kind of guy I wanted to meet, but in the future."

I reminded Lynn and Diane that they had each uttered, "I wish I had met you five years from now" at the end of our relationships. They nodded at the recollection, then I pointed out that it was eleven and eight years ago, respectively.

"I'll tell you what went wrong," Nicole continued. "You broke up with me."

Maura said, "With us, it was one of those timing things."

Ah, yes, timing—the catchall excuse for failed relationships that goes back to Adam and Eve. (I suppose another big one, "I want to see other people," wasn't an option for them.) Maura said that she could never tell if I wanted to be a running buddy or a boyfriend, to which I replied, "Well, you were the one who was always sending mixed singles!" (That's how I said it.) Lynn looked at me and said, "You're pretty drunk, aren't you?"

"Absolutely," I said, making it sound like one syllable.

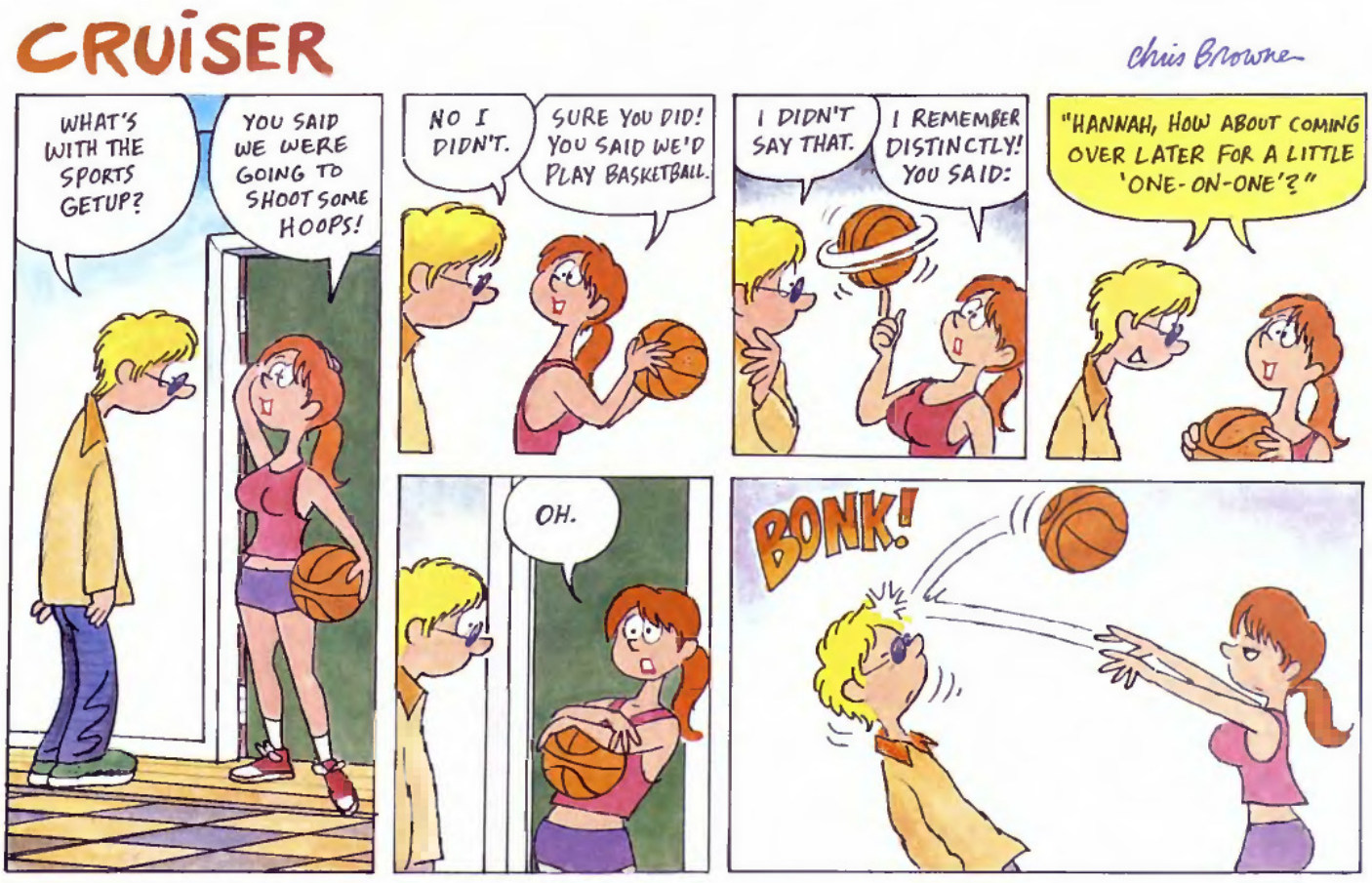
Bottle number seven, also Round Hill Cabernet 1993, tasted exactly like the first, which is to say I could no longer taste it. At this point, the girls started discussing their current relationships and other nonsummit issues. I was reduced to a head-bobbing torso with tousled hair who felt it necessary to stress the level of my inebriation by spelling it—as in, "I am G-O-N-E." It was getting late, and the general concern at the table shifted from what I needed to do to survive in relationships to what I needed to do to survive the evening. The girls decided to summarize my social situation and came up with the following observations:

"Don't change anything. If you wanted to be in a relationship right now, you would be. You just haven't met the right person. Or maybe you have, but you weren't ready, or the timing was wrong."

Interestingly, this is exactly how I've felt all along, and hearing it from these four would have made me feel relieved and vindicated—except that I had fallen asleep. Maura nudged me and asked, "Are you going to get sick tonight?"

"I'd say there's a 20 percent chance I won't."

While I was hunched over the toilet, the girls were downstairs, enjoying bottle number eight, Ruffino Chianti Classico, Riserva 1991, the only good bottle of wine in my collection. Apparently, after I had collapsed for good, they chatted late into the night—four girls who had little in common other than the fact that they had dated me. There was something comforting about this. If I really had a major dating defect, I would never have been able to pull this off without something coming back to bite me. All in all, the summit served its purpose. So what if I drive silly cars, wear old-man shoes and comb my hair once in a while? I've had a social MRI performed by four of the most terrific girls anywhere, and they have pronounced me romantically fit. I'm telling you, Mom, my birthday is coming up, and this could be the year.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Absolute Vegas

(continued from page 124)

time we traveled via limo. My new best friends felt Helmetcam Man shouldn't suffer the indignity of riding in a cab.

At Drink we lost another guy to a girl who recognized me. Our next stop was a strip bar: VIP access to Déjà Vu, followed by a few hours in the back room at Crazy Horse Too, where the girls gave my new pals extra-special lap dances in hopes of making some sort of PLAYBOY connection. Granted, the guys spent close to $2000 there that night, which also engendered good feelings from the staff. I just kept drinking all night and having fun—it was another night in Vegas for me—but the guys made out like bandits.

Another night, I was playing craps alone at the Mirage (for some reason, the friends I travel with seem to conk out early). This amazingly hot girl comes up to me and announces that she "just doesn't understand craps at all" and would be appreciative if I were to teach her how to play. I'm a nice guy—how could I say no? She buys $500 in chips and we play for what was my luckiest hour of gambling ever. She walked away with $4000 and I made $2000 or so. After we cashed in, she announced she knew about a party at the Rio. Trusting guy that I am, I figured I'd go along. I'm not the type to believe those stories of men who wake up in Vegas bathtubs, having had their kidneys stolen, so what did I have to lose?

The party was in a luxury suite on top of the Rio, and it was wild—some of these multiroom high-roller suites have indoor pools, including this one. There was tons of booze, food and drugs—not to mention a group of incredibly sexy women who didn't appear to be strippers, hookers or porn stars. We partied, drank, ate and at one point I swam in the pool with five naked girls. Remember, this was no Olympic-size pool, so we were all nice and close.

Unfortunately, the sun was already coming up and I was fully aware that I had to be on camera in three hours, so it was time to leave. One considerate girl suggested I skip the cab and that we call down to VIP services for a limo. I liked that. I was staying at Mandalay Bay and she was next door at Luxor, so we would share the limo. It turns out that the limo ride wasn't the only ride she had in mind. We ended up having sex in the limo as it drove up and down the Strip for over an hour, dropping me off at the door to Mandalay Bay, utterly exhausted in the best possible way.

Perhaps that's why I keep going back to Las Vegas—I'm hoping for another night like that one.

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living online

(continued from page 40)

Not here. Don't buy a house or rent an apartment, save the payment. You will always be in the office." On the other hand, Yahoo was given good marks by Vault, saying it "offers employees a dynamic environment and the promise of explosive growth and potential riches through stock options." But remember, anyone can post to these bulletin boards pretending to be an employee. So don't base your decision to move to Silicon Valley solely on what you read here.

WRANGLING ON THE WEB

Before you buy anything online, make sure you get the best deal by using a price-comparison site. My favorite is NexTag (**nextag.com**). I was searching for a CD rewritable drive, and NexTag found three dealers offering the Sony Spressa. HardwareStreet.com had the best price: $263.94, including tax and shipping. But I didn't take it. The neat thing about NexTag, which other comparison services don't have, is a feature that lets you make a counteroffer. I entered $215. Seconds later, PCZone.com, which originally offered the drive for $301.28, gave me a price of $218.54. I bought it. Later, I went back and offered $1 on the same drive, and I got the same counteroffer of $218.54 from PCZone. In other words, their rock-bottom price was already stored in the database. You might as well always enter $1 to make sure you get the best deal.

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WHERE & HOW TO BUY

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WIRED

Page 38: "Robot Rovers Breed": **Robots:** By *Sony Electronics*, 800-222-7669. By *Tiger Electronics*, 847-913-8100. By *MGA Entertainment*, 818-894-2525. "Whoop Ass Like Willis": **Software** by *Fox International*, at your local software stores. "Game of the Month": **Software** by *Sega*, 800-872-7342. "Wild Things": **Computer** by *3 COM*, from Palm, Inc., 800-881-7256. **Handheld computers** by *Compaq*, 800-282-6672 and *Casio*, 800-962-2746. **Clip-on camera** by *Kodak*, 800-242-2424.

TRAVEL

Page 41: "Night Moves": **Hotels:** *Delano*, 305-672-2000. **Restaurants:** *Cheeky Monkey*, 305-534-2650. *Wish*, 305-674-9474. *Astor Place*, 305-672-7217. *Tantra*, 305-672-4765. **Clubs:** *Level*, 305-532-1525. *Bar Room*, 305-604-0480. *Chaos*, 305-674-7350. *Club Deuce*, 305-531-6200. "Great Escape": *Grace Bay Club*, 800-946-5757. "Road Stuff": **Auto tool** by *Swiss Army*, 800-243-4045. **Hotel** and **resort** from *Wyndham*, 888-994-2227. **Insect protection suit** by *Harson, Inc.*, 888-796-6756. **Exotic dancer directory** from *Ed Publication*, 727-726-3592 or exotic-dancer.com.

MANTRACK

Page 49: "What Goes Around": **Fans** by *Modern Fan*, 541-482-8545. Page 50: "Tooling Around": **Tools** by *Oxo*, 212-242-3333. "Guys Are Talking About": **Camera** by *Fuji*, 800-800-3854. **CD player** by *Sony*, 800-222-7669.

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Pages 100–101: **Carabiner, sunglasses, cap helmet** and **hammer** by *Climb High*, 800-451-5127. **Chalk bag** by *Wild Things*, 603-356-6907. **Chalk bag, daisy chain** and **backpack** by *Black Diamond*, 801-278-5533. **Climbing rope, four-cam** and **multi-loop gear sling** by *Metolius Mountain*, 541-382-7585. *Lake Shore Athletic Club–Illinois Center*, 312-616-9015. **Rock climbing shoes** by *Five Ten Ascent*, 909-798-4222. **Gear** by *Petzel America*, 877-807-3805. "Learning the Ropes": **Climbing schools:** *Boulder Rock School*, 800-836-4008. *Diamond Sports*, 800-776-2577. *International Mountain Climbing School*, 603-356-7064. *Jackson Hole Mountain Guides*, 800-239-7642. *Vertical Adventures*, 800-514-8785. "The Fake Take": **Indoor climbing gyms:** *Boulder Rock School*, 800-836-4008. *Sports Center at Chelsea Piers*, 212-336-6000. *Rockcreation*, 310-207-7199. *Stone Works Climbing Gym*, 972-323-1047. *OKC Rocks*, 405-319-1400. *Vertical Stronghold*, 920-734-0321. *Upper Limits*, 309-829-8255.

DIGICAMS CAN

Pages 126–128: **Digital cameras:** By *Fuji Photo Film*, 800-800-3854. By *Sony Electronics*, 800-222-7669. By *Ricoh*, 888-742-6410. By *Olympus America*, 888-553-4448. By *Kodak*, 800-242-2424. By *Nikon*, 800-526-4566. By *Panasonic*, 800-211-7262.

ON THE SCENE

Page 179: "Cool Tech Under $250": **Scanning device** by *C Technologies*, 877-275-2736. **Cordless phone** by *Panasonic*, 800-211-7262. **DJ mixer** by *Yamaha Electronics*, 714-522-9000. **Watchman** by *Sony Electronics*, 800-222-7669. **Minidisc player** by *Casio Communications*, 800-962-2746.

Various items that are featured in this issue are available for purchase online. For details, check out products.playboy.com.

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DIGICAMS

(continued from page 128)

new digicam technologies. Fujifilm, for example, claims the number of pixels is not the key factor in determining resolution. The quality of the pixel—the size, shape and layout on the image sensor—counts, too. Consequently, Fuji's FinePix 4700 Zoom features an improved imaging sensor that the company says will deliver nearly twice the picture quality of a conventional digital camera. Toshiba has developed a pixel-shifting routine that uses two exposures of each scene, which are combined to improve picture quality. And Samsung, Sony, Nikon and Olympus argue that high-quality optics are the way to ensure a sharper picture. Nikon and Olympus use their own professional-quality lenses. Top digicams by Samsung and Sony feature Schneider and Carl Zeiss optics.

The competitive arguments are changing, and future digicams will undoubtedly outperform the best ones we have today—and not only in resolution (however it's defined). Still, plenty of innovative, high-performance cameras are beckoning, ready for the web when you are.

SPEAKING OF THE WEB

You want prints made from digital files? You could do it yourself on an inkjet printer. (We like Hewlett-Packard's Photosmart models, which produce prints that don't fade too much over time.) For higher-quality output, you can take the files to a processor. Or you can upload your files to an online photo processor and wait a few days for the images to arrive via U.S. mail. These sites create communities in which photo buffs can share their passion for picture taking.

Because server space is cheap, service providers give it away free. For new online photo companies, this means no-charge websites designed to promote sharing. You post your pictures, give your pals the password and mount an exhibition on the Internet.

Are you dying to share those shots of your new girlfriend? You can do it in an open gallery at Club Photo (clubphoto.com) or privately by reserving personal scrapbook space. You can also order prints of your own images and stock up on mouse pads, T-shirts and chocolates featuring your photos.

Other services offered on these sites include gear reviews reprinted from photography magazines at Photoalley (photoalley.com). Photo experts write articles for Photohighway (photohighway.com) and Photochannel (photochannel.com). And for Internet immediacy, Photopoint (photopoint.com) has a "photo of the day" contest. Get those beach pictures ready.

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Order now and you'll receive absolutely FREE, the *Pheromones for the Mind* audio program recorded in *digital 3D sound*. This is the first mind/brain tool ever designed to automatically increase your own pheromone levels when you meet that special someone you want to attract.

But that's not all. You'll also receive four state-of-the-art subliminal programs on two double length cassettes including: *Sexual Potency, Intimate Ecstasy, Personality Dynamics* and *Attract the Opposite Sex.*

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Supercharge Your Sex Life

Order two or more vials of *Attractant 1000+* and we'll also include an incredible second bonus: a FREE six-month supply of our sizzling new *Attractant 1000 Tropical Blend.* This potent pheromone oil has been specially designed for *hot, long-lasting outdoor fun.* You'll magnify your sexual charisma, confidence, and performance to an unprecedented level. But supplies are limited, so don't delay, *order now!*

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STILL ROCKIN'

(continued from page 100)

not to say climbing is no longer dangerous. It can be. But the sport's adventure quota is relative to the individual. The 3000-foot face of El Capitan, normally a three-day jaunt for a roped-up team of experts, was recently climbed in an afternoon by Dean Potter—solo and mostly unroped, with no protective gear. "It depends on how you define adventure," explains Potter, the reigning king of risk takers. "If you want to push the envelope, the possibilities are endless. But you can go easy."

THE BASICS

Whether you're going extreme or mainstream, there are two ways to rock climb. During a "free" climb, you ascend using only your hands and feet. "Aid" is when you climb using rope assistance or hardware embedded in the rock face.

Equipment includes pitons (steel spikes), spring-loaded aluminum camming devices and aluminum wedges called nuts, which are placed by hand into cracks and are easily removable. Shoes, a harness and a belay device cost less than $200, but a complete rack of quick draws, cams and nuts can cost three or four times as much.

There are several ways to go when free climbing. Bouldering, which involves scaling boulders without a rope, is exhilarating and low on the death-risk scale. The only gear you'll need is a pair of sticky rubber shoes and a chalk bag. Sport climbing is also relatively safe because the protection, usually in the form of stainless steel bolts, is permanently affixed to the rock. In traditional, or adventure, climbing, the protective gear is placed and removed during each ascent. Soloing—free climbing alone without a rope—is considered the ultimate quest. It's also the most dangerous type of climbing. One slip and it's over. (Like white-water rafting, rock climbing has its own rating system, which ranks climbs according to duration, difficulty and danger. Called the Yosemite decimal system, it ranges from 5.0 [easy] to 5.14 [the hardest].)

CLIMBING ACTION

As the sport of rock climbing has grown around the globe, so have the number of climbing areas. In the U.S. alone there are thousands of destinations. Here are the jewels, rated according to their pucker factor.

Triplets on the wall: Erica, Nicole and Jaclyn Dahm climb 100 feet on the indoor wall at Chicago's Lake Shore Athletic Club. The facility is one of hundreds of spots in the U.S. where you can train safely before venturing out and trying the real thing on your own.

EASY DOES IT

The Gunks (Shawangunk Mountains, New Paltz, New York): Less than two hours from Manhattan, this spot provides the country's best introduction to rock climbing. Huge overhanging sections of rock, called roofs, make the Gunks' cliffs appear formidable. But ladder rung–size holds give climbers a hidden advantage.

Eldo (Eldorado Canyon State Park, Colorado): This is the ideal urban crag. It's close enough to Boulder that you can tick off a quick route after work and still make happy hour. Bastille Crack, a route that's considered the quintessential crack climb, towers 200 feet over Clear Creek, which tumbles down Eldorado Canyon. Despite the intimidating relief of the face—it's nearly vertical—the rock yields good rests at critical intervals. The hardest part of the climb is only 20 feet off the ground.

LOSE THE TRAINING WHEELS

Cathedral Ledge (North Conway, New Hampshire): There's a reason New Hampshire is known as the Granite State. Cathedral Ledge is the Yosemite of the East—400-foot walls crisscrossed with arching cracks and knife-blade corners. This is probably the least crowded major climbing destination in the country. Midweek, your only company on the cliffs might be peregrine falcons. Cathedral Ledge is true adventure climbing, with few preplaced bolts. Take plenty of protective gear, since long falls are a real possibility.

The Tower (Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming): Aliens used this 500-foot volcanic plug as a landing pad in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, but you don't need a spaceship to reach the summit. Standing 1267 feet above the wandering Belle Fourche River, it was first climbed in 1938 during the daring rescue of a parachutist who was stranded on top. Although the smooth sides of the Tower appear unclimbable from a distance, closer inspection reveals intricate cracks that carve their way to the summit.

The Valley (Yosemite National Park, California): This is ground zero of the American (and world) rock climbing scene. Although there's abundant opportunity to risk your neck, this is the place to have a five-star adventure with some semblance of control. Be warned that although temperatures at the valley floor may be sizzling, a ledge several thousand feet up can get chilly, especially if you're stranded overnight.

Red Rocks (Red Rock Canyon National Monument, Nevada): Climbing and wilderness are not what most people have in mind when heading to Sin City, but a mere 20 miles from the Las Vegas Strip lies one of the most popular climbing areas in America. The user-friendly sandstone at Red Rocks has an abundance of holds that make it one of the planet's least intimidating training grounds. There are plenty of short, well-protected sport climbs within a casual five-minute stroll of the scenic loop road. But for those wanting some altitude, the canyons offer it up with more than 1000 multipitch routes to choose from, some nearly 2000 feet long.

EXPERT GRIP REQUIRED

The Black (Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Colorado): The Black has a reputation as a playground for climbing's lunatic fringe. Climbers are cheek to beak with peregrine falcons and eagles as the birds swoop down the tight canyon. Rock quality ranges from hard as steel to snow-cone consistency.

Fischer Towers (Moab, Utah): Sandcastles are sturdier than some of the towers you'll find here. While protection placed in granite is generally solid, the cat box–grade sandstone of Fischer Towers can crumble in a strong breeze. The rock's facade is so bad, many climbers wear goggles.

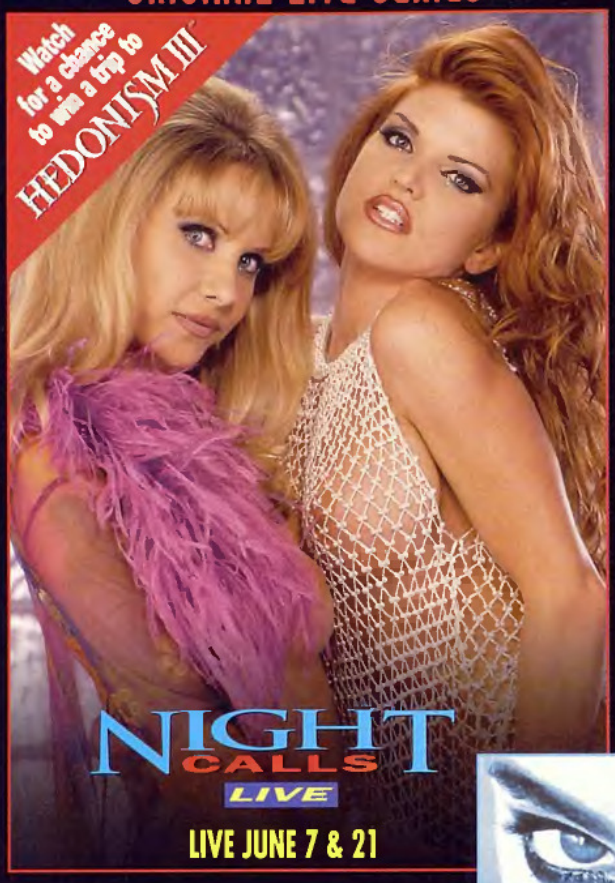
LEARNING THE ROPES

So you'd like to climb Red Rocks or the Black, but you don't want to spend the next 20 years training. The answer? Hire a guide and jump on some of the world's classic vertical faces, getting the thrill of a lifetime on routes that unguided climbers spend years trying to bag. Of course, you'll have more fun if you already know the basics of the sport. Here are some top schools that will teach you rope craft and rock technique. They also employ first-rate guides who are comfortable on summits around the world.

Boulder Rock School (Boulder): Boulderites have long regarded their town as the center of the universe, and the city's climbing community is no exception. But there's no arguing that the rock is out of this world. The $69 half-day class is a true bargain. The point of the class is fun, which means quickly jumping on the rock and getting a lot of air under your feet.

Diamond Sports (New Paltz, New York): Owner Al Diamond taught climbing for 14 years. Guides work equally well with novices as with clients wanting an expert partner for local test pieces. Beginning classes are $100; private

ORIGINAL LIVE SERIES

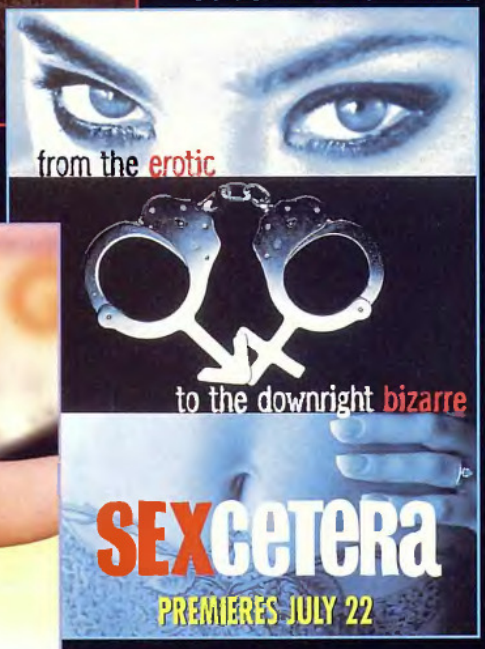


PLAYMATE HOSTS

Shannon Stewart
Miss June

Neferteri Shepherd
Miss July

ORIGINAL SERIES



ORIGINAL LIVE EVENT

ORIGINAL PROGRAMS

more than you ever imagined...

IN JUNE

2000 PLAYMATE VIDEO CALENDAR - Playboy TV takes you on a cruise of your favorite Centerfold stars from '98 and '99. June 4, 5, 14, 22, 27

CARIBBEAN UNDERCOVER - An undercover agent uses big guns to stop underworld crooks. Featuring Tera Patrick of *Night Calls 411*. June 11, 15, 21

NIGHT CALLS LIVE* - Find out if you're well-wired for the fiery and unpredictable antics of Juli Ashton and Tiffany.
LIVE June 7; Replay June 10, 12, 21
LIVE June 21; Replay June 24, 26, 28

RAW: THE RISE & FALL OF AN ADULT FILM STAR - What goes up must come down, and this rising adult star is no exception. June 25, 30

WORLD OF PLAYBOY: NEFERTERI SHEPHERD - Get the Independence Day highlights with our most star-studded July Playmate. June 11, 13, 14, 16, 22, 25, 29

IN JULY

HOT CLUB CALIFORNIA - The dreams of three sizzling sisters come true when a suitcase stuffed with cash falls at their feet. July 8, 13, 17, 26

PLAYBOY'S STRIPSEARCH: PORTLAND - Let Raylene and friends blow the clouds away from over Portland's throbbing night life. July 15, 18, 20, 23, 26, 28

SEX COURT: STIFF PENALTY - Judge Julie and crew are all ready to lay down the law and serve up one-of-a-kind desserts. July 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 24, 26

SEXCETERA - Let the erotic reporting of our probing journalists transform your notions of pure pleasure.
July 22, 24, 25, 27, 30

WET & WILD: LIVE FROM LAS VEGAS - Pretty Playmates show you why the jokers aren't the only wild cards on the Strip with a bikini fashion show. LIVE July 7

CC All premiere programs are closed captioned.

PLAYBOY TV

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erotic entertainment at its best

guiding is $190 per day, gear included.

The International Mountain Climbing School (North Conway, New Hampshire): JFK Jr. learned to climb in North Conway, for good reason. The scene is mellow, the rock is world-class and there are no crowds. Guides specialize in international trips, including 26,000-foot peaks. Introductory classes start at $85 per day, private guides at $195.

Jackson Hole Mountain Guides (Jackson, Wyoming): The Tetons have great adventure climbing—high rocky faces and long approaches. Don't miss Irene's Arete, one of Tom Brokaw's favorite climbs. The school also specializes in trips to Red Rocks, Mount Whitney, the Wind River Range and Devils Tower. Group lessons start at $80; private guiding is $250 per day.

Vertical Adventures (Newport Beach, California): Director Bob Gaines taught Sylvester Stallone to climb (well, sort of) for *Cliff Hanger*. Courses are taught at Joshua Tree National Park and Idyllwild, California. Basic rock craft starts at $85. If you're serious about the sport, the four-day courses are quite a bargain at $315.

THE FAKE TAKE

Indoor climbing gyms are probably the best place to learn to climb. There's no worry of falling rock, poison oak or getting lost, leaving you to concentrate on developing strength and technique. You can take those basic skills outdoors and apply them to real rock—or not.

At last count, there were 400 to 500 artificial climbing walls in the U.S. Here is a nationwide selection of the best.

Boulder Rock Club (Boulder): If you want to see the stars of rock climbing practice their skills, hit this spot. Day pass: $14. Annual membership: $440.

The Sports Center at Chelsea Piers (New York City): Central Park has awesome bouldering, but the best roped cragging in the Big Apple is on the climbing wall at Chelsea Piers, a game park for contact sports, golf and horseback riding. The day fee is $40 for nonmembers. Beginning climbing classes, with a total of nine hours of instruction, are $150.

Rockreation (Los Angeles): Where the real Hollywood stars hang. A big plus is the fully equipped locker rooms and weight machines, while a minus may be the occasional celebrity photo shoot. Walk-in fee is $15 per day; annual passes are $600.

Stone Works Climbing Gym (Carrollton, Texas): When the owners heard someone else had built a taller wall, they dug 11 feet into the ground to remedy the situation. The new route is 121 feet tall. Outdoor walls are 80 feet. First-time climbers pay $22.73, which includes gear and a one-hour class. Day rate: $10.73. Annual rate: $350.

OKC Rocks (Oklahoma City): This gym gets the award for most surreal location. Climbs are routed up the inside and outside walls of 15 abandoned grain silos. Outside routes are 145 feet high. The walk-in fee is $10. Beginners can get started with a 15-minute orientation.

Vertical Stronghold (Appleton, Wisconsin): Seven artificial crack climbs help gym rats prepare for the real thing. This is the only gym in the country with its own ice-climbing area—a nearby quarry 130 feet high. Gym rates are $9 per day; an annual pass is $325. Seasonal ice climbing starts at $25 per day.

Upper Limits (Bloomington, Illinois): This old grain elevator features 110-foot-tall routes and has both indoor and outdoor climbing areas. Day rate: $10. Annual membership: $299.

WORLD'S TOUGHEST CLIMB

You've mastered all of our recommended destinations and are a regular on the indoor scene. So what's the ultimate climbing challenge for a rock star? Action Direct in Frankenjura, Germany. An unimposing 25-foot climb from flat ground, the razor-sharp rock is virtually blank-faced. *Climbing Magazine* calls Action Direct the sport-climbing achievement of the century. First conquered in 1991 by Wolfgang Gullich (who was Sylvester Stallone's climbing double in *Cliff Hanger*), the route has been repeated only once since Gullich's ascent. Not awe-inspiring to look at, but it'll earn you powerful bragging rights.

"Now, see here! My name is Thomson and that is my gazelle!"

PLAYMATE NEWS

BRANDE ON TOUR

It ain't easy being a Playmate. When a Centerfold's issue hits newsstands, one of her obligations is to tour the country, stopping in dozens of cities and doing scads of interviews and autograph sessions. Exhausting? You bet. We caught up with Miss

Left to right: Talking dirty on Q101. Chicago Bears quarterback Cade McNown hangs with Brande at Iron Mike's Grille. Going for the high score with Playboy Publicity Coordinator Rob Hilburger at ESPN Zone.

April 2000 Brande Roderick in Chicago, home of Playboy's world headquarters. What follows is an excerpt from her crazy itinerary: Wednesday, March 15. Brande and her mother arrive in Chicago. Check into suite at Omni Hotel. Thursday, 6 A.M.: Makeup artist arrives at hotel. 7:30 A.M.: Telephone interview with WROK Radio Rockford. 9 A.M.: Television interview with *Fox Thing in the Morning*. 11 A.M.: Meet employees and sign autographs at Playboy office. 12:15 P.M.: Lunch with key advertising clients. 2:30 P.M.: Radio interview with Q101. 3:30 P.M.: Sign autographs at ESPN Zone. 5 P.M.: Back to hotel for break. 6:45 P.M.: Party in skybox at Chicago Blackhawks game. 9:45 P.M.: Interview at O'Callahan's Pub. Friday, 8:30 A.M.: Interview with radio station B96. Saturday, 8:15 A.M.: Depart Chicago.

BRANDE ON HER RELATIONSHIP WITH HEF:

"People think he's this red-blooded bachelor, but Hef's very faithful. I admit that when the relationship started, I wasn't sure where it was going to end up. But we're in love."

PLAYMATE BIRTHDAYS

July 3: Miss July 1984
Liz Stewart
July 7: Miss September 1975
Mesina Miller
July 22: Miss August 1998
Angela Little
July 25: Miss May 1993
Elke Jeinsen
July 31: Miss December 1961
Lynn Karrol

SUZI'S BACK

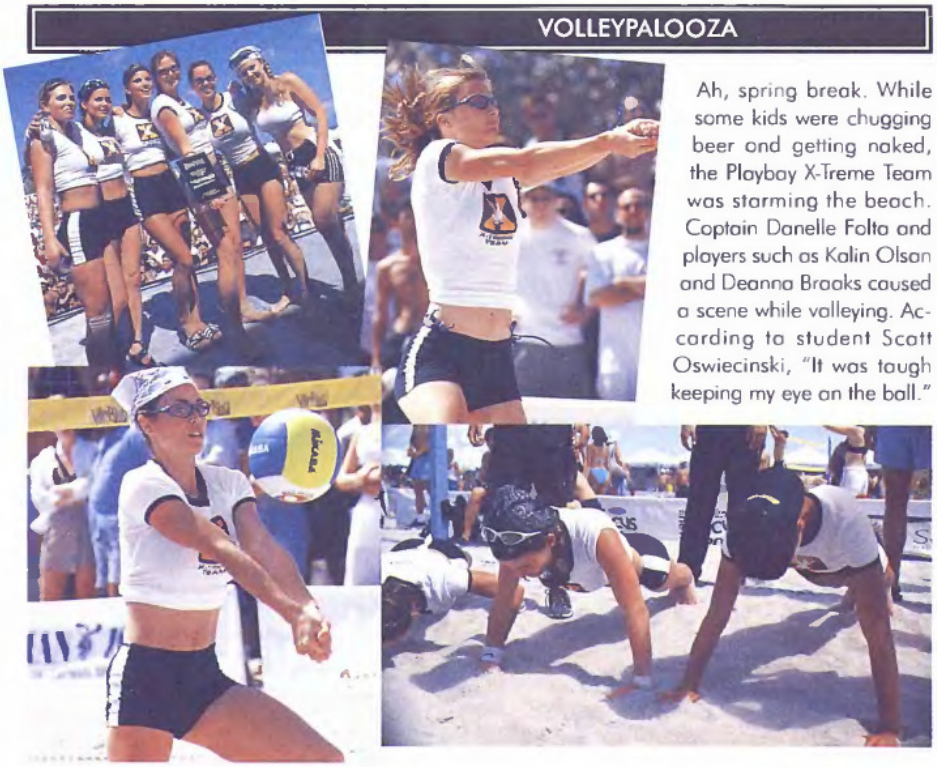
We'd be lying if we said we didn't miss seeing Suzi Simpson's mug all over the place. Although her Playmate pictorial in January 1992 kicked off a successful modeling career, Suzi quickly tired of the glamorous but high-pressure lifestyle. Now, thanks to her good friend Miss December 1989 Petra Verkaik, Suzi has returned to the modeling and acting scene. "I took a needed break, but now I'm back in full force," Suzi says. "It feels great. I look better than ever. And I'm getting ready to do a comedy movie with Petra."

45 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

In the good old days (1955 and 1956, to be exact), Janet Pilgrim was a Playmate three times. Hef held a special place in his heart for the girl who worked in the magazine's circulation department and who went by the name Charlaine Karalus. "She was the girl next door with her clothes off. What a revolution that notion would inspire," Hef says. Janet adds: "Posing for the Centerfold was a big step. The pictures are modest by today's standards, but back then they weren't." Of course, Hef was on location providing moral support. He's the shadowy figure you see above.

Janet Pilgrim.

VOLLEYPALOOZA



Ah, spring break. While some kids were chugging beer and getting naked, the Playboy X-Treme Team was storming the beach. Captain Danelle Folta and players such as Kalin Olson and Deanna Brooks caused a scene while volleying. According to student Scott Oswiecinski, "It was tough keeping my eye on the ball."

PLAYMATE NEWS

My Favorite Playmate By Debra Messing

Marilyn Monroe is my favorite because she epitomizes the ultimate female fantasy for a man. Also, her story is complicated and fascinating. I love the old Fifties glamour that Marilyn represents. Her nudity is pure and beautiful because it's imperfect.

VIRTUALLY GILLIAN

Playmate and Internet entrepreneur Gillian Bonner is cashing in on the fact that sex and rock and roll go hand in hand. Click on sexnrockn roll.com, Gillian's latest project, and you'll see what we mean. The funky website, produced in association with Playboy.com, gives viewers a look at actual rock-and-roll lifestyles, including concerts, tours, parties and wild women. On March 9, Gillian and fellow Centerfolds Natalia Sokolova, Angel Boris and Carrie Westcott hosted a cybercast from the Mansion's Limp Bizkit New School Pajama party, where the girls met and interviewed Limp Bizkit members Fred Durst, John Otto and Sam Rivers. Also heating up the Mansion that night were April cover girl Bijou Phillips, Leonardo DiCaprio, Eric Erlandson of Hole, Lauren Holly, Rachel Hunter, Luke Wilson, Tara Reid, *Farmclub.com* host Matt Pinfield and Playmates Stacy Fuson, Lisa Dergan, Ava Fabian, Daphnee Lynn Duplaix, Heather Kozar, Julia Schultz, Jenny McCarthy, Jodi Ann Paterson and Brande Roderick. In the future, sexnrocknroll.com will feature other bands and Playmates in action. "Technology is not just for geeks anymore," Gillian says.

DEAR VICKI

We like to think of Vicki (McCarty) Iovine as a cooler, hipper Dear Abby. Besides serving up sage advice in "Girlfriends' Guide to Family" (her witty column in the *Los Angeles Times*), Vicki writes for *Child* magazine and is a parenting correspondent for NBC's *Later Today*. Her first book, *The Girlfriends' Guide to Pregnancy*, led to two spin-offs: *The Girlfriends' Guide to Surviving the First Year of Motherhood* and *The Girlfriends' Guide to Toddlers*. Expect *The Girlfriends' Guide to Teenagers* in a decade or so.

WHO SAID THAT?

A.

Can you guess which sound bite belongs to whom? This month's chatty Centerfolds are (A) Miss September 1990 Kerri Kendall, (B) Miss June 1997 Carrie Stevens, (C) Miss February 2000 Suzanne Stokes and (D) 1997 PMOY Victoria Silvstedt. The answers appear below.

(1) "Last night I went to a big movie premiere. As I was walking down the red carpet, the photographers went crazy and wouldn't stop screaming my name. All of my PLAYBOY fans were chasing me down for autographs. The afterparty was a blast. My girlfriend and I sat at the bar and talked to Ben Affleck and Matt Damon for a while, until Pamela Anderson Lee came along and stole their attention!"

B.

(2) "A guy tried to pick me up recently by telling me he was a doctor. When I asked him his Drug Enforcement Administration number, he didn't even know what a DEA number is. He was busted!"

C.

(3) "I went to my 10-year high school reunion. It was fun signing autographs for my old teachers. I told my math teacher that although I didn't pay attention in class, I spent time practicing my autograph."

D.

(4) "Here's what I know about alligators: They like marshmallows. And if you shoot them with a BB gun, the pellets bounce right off."

ANSWERS

(1) D (2) A (3) B (4) C

PLAYMATE GOSSIP

Priscilla Taylor and her fiancé, **Richard Paull Goldin,** were guests of honor at a black-tie engagement party in Los Angeles.

Priscilla's last movie role was in *Six Days, Seven Nights*. Ricky plays Gary Dawson on *The Young and the Restless*. . . . **Pamela Anderson Lee** landed on the cover of a recent *Entertainment Weekly*. Inside was a profile of Pam and her successful show *V.I.P.* Fans will be happy to know that a *V.I.P.* video game is in the works. . . . **Carrie Stevens** is set to appear in three features: *Twists and Turns*, *Ghost of a Chance*, and *Metal God* with **Mark Wahlberg** and **Jennifer Aniston**. . . . Teen sensation **Christina Aguilera** turned to **Kelly Monaco** to appear in her new video, *Turn to You*. . . . We've always had a thing for the Bond girls, and now **Brande Roderick, Victoria Fuller** and **Elisa Bridges** are joining that elite group—sort of. The three appear in TBS cable channel ads that spoof 007 films. . . . **Danelle Folta** (pictured below) touts Playboy clothing in a sexy print ad. . . . The Dahm triplets played killer robots on an episode of **Jaime Bergman's** series, *Son of the Beach*. They also showed up in an episode of *Relic Hunter* on UPN. . . . When the Playboy X-Treme Team isn't kicking butt on the beach volleyball court, the gals are doing cameos on the small screen. They were a panel of judges on an episode of **Don Johnson's** *Nash Bridges*. . . . Congratulations to **Martha Smith** and her new hubby, **Harrison Keith England,** who were married on May 7 in California.

Pamela as cover girl.

Danelle wears it well.

¡Muy Caliente!

Playboy's Lusty Latin Ladies

No one exudes raw sexuality like Latin women. From their mysterious dark features to the way they set their curvaceous figures in motion when the music moves them, these ladies aren't shy about expressing their innermost desires. In America, we're fortunate to have a large number of Latinas living within our borders, and Playboy is proud to present the most passionate and hot-blooded of the bunch. Forget Ricky Martin and Marc Anthony—the bombshells in this incendiary video give true meaning to the term "Latin explosion!" Full nudity. Approx. 60 min.
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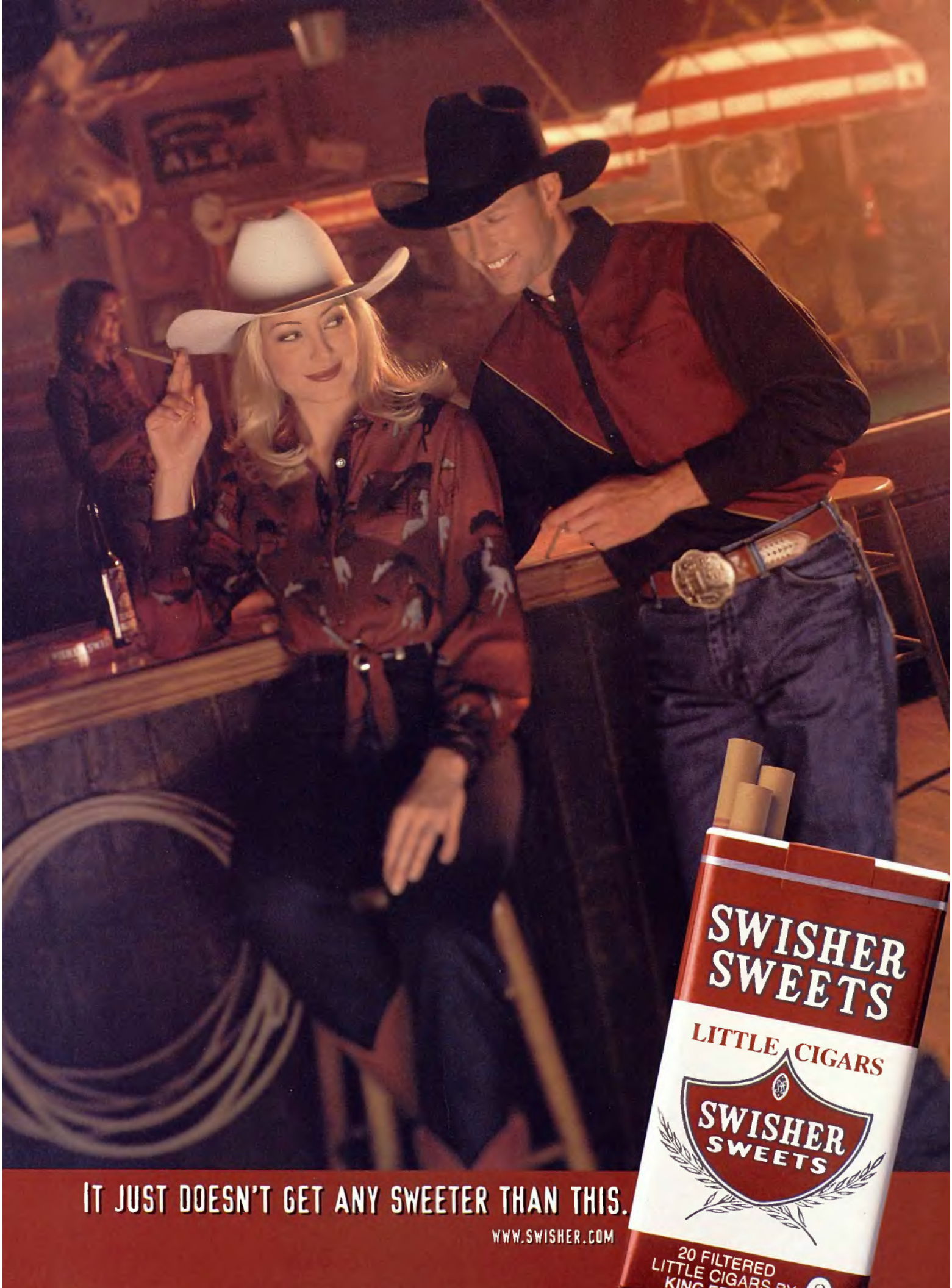

IT JUST DOESN'T GET ANY SWEETER THAN THIS.

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PLAYBOY on the scene

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN

COOL TECH UNDER $250

These days, it takes less of your money to buy more electronics. While you would have been lucky to leave the store with a mediocre portable cassette player a few years ago, today's $250 gadgets offer lots of bells and whistles. Say you're reading a magazine on an airplane and you want to save an article. You can tear it out, or whip out the C-Pen 600 (below) and scan the article into memory. When you get where you're going, simply beam the text to a computer, PalmPilot or similar gizmo. If you need a new cordless phone, Panasonic's KX-TG2550S 2.4 GHz GigaRange Extreme SST phone lets you talk four miles from the base and is shock- and splash-resistant. Other tech toys include: Yamaha's DJXIIB DJ Box (a CD music machine that lets you play mix master with a variety of dance and scratch effects), Sony's FDL-250T Watchman portable TV with a 2.5-inch liquid crystal display, and Casio's XG-3 minidisc player with a 40-second shock memory. —BETH TOMKIW

JAMES IMBROGNO

Far left: C Technologies' C-Pen 600 is a portable scanning device that stores up to 2000 pages of text that can be beamed to your PC or PalmPilot ($250). Left: Yamaha's DJXIIB is a MIDI-compatible CD player with a variety of special effects ($90).

Right (left to right): Panasonic's KX-TG2550S 2.4 GHz GigaRange Extreme SST in silver offers clear reception at eight times the distance of a 900-megahertz cordless. Features include caller ID on the handset, a 30-station phone directory and 50-station caller ID memory, plus a rugged design that resists grime and moisture ($200). Sony's FDL-250T color Watchman has a 2.5-inch liquid crystal display, a flip-up sun shield and a flexible antenna that also serves as a neck strap ($170). Casio's XG-3 minidisc player is virtually skip-proof, thanks to a 40-second shock memory (about $130).

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 170.

Grapevine

Sifting Through the Sands

A model and singer (and daughter of former teen idol Tommy), JESSICA SANDS puts on orchids for the camera.

Eve and Her Adam Play Ruff

As the title of her platinum solo album suggests, rapper EVE is the *Ruff Ryders' First Lady*. Celebrating Eve's tour and a number one CD, her boyfriend and producer, STEVIE JAY, tips his cigar to all that revealing fishnet.

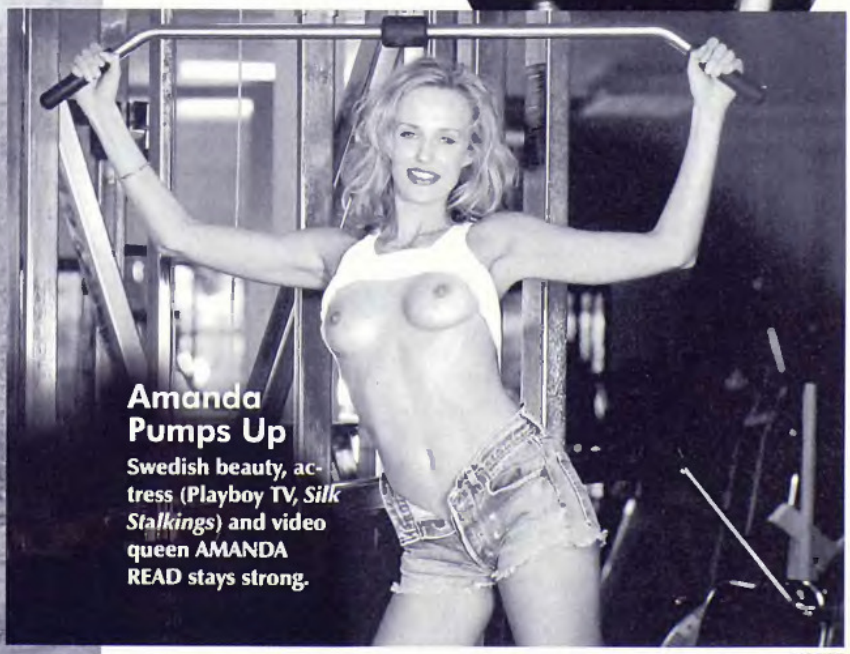
© DAVID ALLOCCA DMI

Put the Squeeze on Charlize

The gorgeous CHARLIZE THERON has seven movies for 2000, including Will Smith and Matt Damon's *Legend of Bagger Vance* and *Navy Diver* with Robert De Niro. Her assets light up this photo.

© JOHN SPELLMAN IRETNA LTD

© VINCE CARATOZZO



Amanda Pumps Up

Swedish beauty, actress (Playboy TV, *Silk Stalkings*) and video queen AMANDA READ stays strong.

© J.B. PHOTO

© LUIGI CAZZANIGA /RETNA LTD

The Sopranos Take Flight

MICHAEL IMPERIOLI convincingly plays the winsome, menacing Christopher on *The Sopranos*. Whether he's pitching a screenplay or recovering from gunshot wounds, Imperioli is bada bing, bada boom.

© PATRICK BARRETT/GLOBE PHOTOS INC.

Touched by an Angel

LUCY LIU and crime-busting cohorts Cameron Diaz and Drew Barrymore are bringing *Charlie's Angels* to theaters. Lucy also co-stars with Jackie Chan in the Western *Shanghai Noon*.

Say Amen, Somebody

Texan KARYN PENTECOST was featured in Playboy Special Editions' *Voluptuous Vixens* and played a cheerleader in Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*. Make that weekdays, too.

© DOUGLAS STIEGLITZ

THE NEIMAN COLLECTION

LeRoy Neiman's relationship with PLAYBOY is long and illustrious, beginning with artwork dating back to the Fifties. Now Knoedler Publishing has released *The Prints of LeRoy Neiman 1991–2000*, a 210-page hardcover containing color reproductions of the 82 serigraphs and five etchings created by him during the past decade. There's also a comprehensive illustrated index of previous graphics, an essay by art critic Jan Avgikos and a statement by Neiman himself. Price: $150 from Hammer Graphics Gallery in New York at 212-644-4400.

TOWN AND COUNTRY SILKS

World War II aviators carried survival maps printed on silk. Today, similar maps of cities, states, countries and even vineyards are available on silk handkerchiefs ($10) and scarves ($15) that appeal to both sexes. There's even a scarf and a handkerchief of the world—in case you can't decide. Microsoie in Montreal is the manufacturer, and you can view its products online at microsoie.com.

3
Tidbit - 5
2
Tidbit - 1
wonder what really goes in a dressing room?
ey did it at the ballet."
Somehow, it really annoy
J
Target - 10
4
Testimonial
Discard any Trigger unless Pope is Target then treat as a Tidbit worth +20.
Deft footwork can let you dance around many Scandals.
"Watch her dance around it."
blic Official

HOW SCANDALOUS CAN YOU GET?

Of course that's porn star Nina Hartley pictured on the two of hearts. We'd know that face anywhere. Her image is just one of many included in a deck of 54 Scandal cards, a game that's not for the Old Maid, Go Fish or Authors crowd. Scandal is played by two to six players, with each player contributing cards that add to a growing scandal—the wilder, the better. The winner is whoever reaches 200 points first, but if you play Scandals right, nobody in this game really loses. Price: $13.69, from mgames.com.

RIDERS ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

Burt Richmond never met a challenge he didn't like. So, after competing in the Peking-to-Paris car rally several years ago, the tourmeister of Lotus Tours decided to add a Kathmandu-to-Lhasa itinerary to the motorcycle trips his company offers worldwide. Sign up now and you can be one of 10 riders who'll leave Kathmandu early in October for 12 days on 620 miles of unpaved road, stopping off at temples, monasteries and three-star yurts on the way to 16,000-foot mountain passes. The cost per rider is $5040, and that includes the use of a 1998 India Enfield 500cc Bullet motorcycle, all hotels, meals, two support vehicles, a tour guide and internal airfare. There's also a reverse trip back to Kathmandu from October 16 to 29. Call 312-951-0031 for more information, or visit lotustours.com.

THE RACER'S EDGE

USAopoly, a licensee of Hasbro, has just released the first-ever Monopoly game named after an individual, and the winner is—Dale Earnhardt. Everything involved in this special-edition game—from the board to the houses and hotels (they're now race shops and track garages)—has been given a stock car spin. Price: about $35 in stores, or check usaopoly.com.

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

Firecrackers first exploded in China more than a thousand years ago, and *pao chuk* (as the Chinese call them) haven't stopped popping since. Everything from the origins to a label price guide is included in *Firecrackers: The Art and History*, a Ten Speed Press $19.95 softcover by Warren Dotz, Jack Mingo and George Moyer. The pictures of vintage cracker labels alone make it worth the price. Check your bookstore.

EATIN' BIG IN THE BIG EASY

As if Mardi Gras weren't enough excess for one year, the ninth annual New Orleans Wine and Food Experience will take place July 12 to 16. For $375 per person you can join in an extravaganza that includes vinos from more than 100 wineries worldwide and fare from dozens of local restaurants. All that plus food-and-wine block parties and, as the topper on Sunday, a gala champagne jazz brunch and fine wine auction. To register for the experience, call 504-529-WINE.

WE LOVE A MYSTERY

It's a mystery to us how they did it, but best-selling author Tony Hillerman and Otto Penzler, owner of the Mysterious Bookshop on West 56th Street in New York, chose 46 pieces of superb suspense fiction from hundreds of selections for *The Best American Mystery Stories of the Century*, a $28 Houghton Mifflin hardcover. Yes, contributions by Raymond Chandler, Elmore Leonard and Patricia Highsmith are included, but who would have thought there'd also be whodunits by James Thurber and Joyce Carol Oates? Check your local bookstore.

RETURN WITH US NOW . . .

Abbott and Costello's "Who's on first?" routine, *Inner Sanctum*'s squeaking door and Humphrey Bogart's *Maltese Falcon* broadcast are just a few of the dozens of excerpts from radio shows of yesteryear contained on two CDs bound into *This Was Radio*. The hardcover itself is a visual history of audio's golden age, with vintage photos galore. Entertainment industry historian Ronald Lackmann wrote the text and PLAYBOY movie critic Leonard Maltin did the introduction. Price: $39.95, in bookstores.

Next Month

OLYMPIC SIZZLE

EX-CON ARTIST

150 AND COUNTING

REMEMBERING DOROTHY

DARVA CONGER—RICK ROCKWELL, EAT YOUR HEART OUT. THE WOMAN SPURNED ON *WHO WANTS TO MARRY A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE?* LOOKS LIKE A MILLION BUCKS TO US

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SELF-ABSORPTION—RAGING NARCISSISTS ARE NOTHING NEW, BUT THEY HAVE RECENTLY BECOME A PLAGUE. OPRAH, DAVID GEFFEN, TINA BROWN, PUFFY COMBS—DON'T GET US STARTED! HUMOR BY **JOE QUEENAN**

MILLIONAIRES—THE NOUVEAU RICHE GET YOUNGER. THEIR FABULOUS FIEFDOMS INCLUDE PLUTOCRAT BABES, MASTER GOLD DIGGERS AND SUPREME TOYS. READ THIS AND WEEP. BY **JAMIE MALANOWSKI**

YOU DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER 150. WANT TO SCREW?—DO YOU WANT SMOOTH SKIN, A SPRING IN YOUR STEP AND AN ACTIVE SEX LIFE WHEN YOU'RE A CENTENARIAN? GENETIC RESEARCHERS CALL IT HYPERLONGEVITY AND SAY IT'S ON THE WAY. HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED. BY **KATHLEEN SHARP**

JOHN MALKOVICH—SPIKE JONZE'S MOVIE TOOK US INSIDE MALKOVICH'S HEAD. NOW **KRISTINE MCKENNA** DELIVERS AN UNPREDICTABLE PLAYBOY INTERVIEW ABOUT THE GENIUS OF DR. DRE, THE WONDERS OF A JELL-O DIET AND WHY DUSTIN HOFFMAN'S FARTS WOULD MAKE YOU LAUGH SO HARD, YOU'D CRY

FUTURE OLYMPICS—IF PLAYBOY RAN THE SUMMER GAMES, THERE WOULD BE MORE BODY OIL AND LESS CLOTHING. PHOTOGRAPHER **GUIDO ARGENTINI** BRINGS AN ATHLETIC FANTASY TO LIFE

AIMEE MANN—VOICES CARRY, ESPECIALLY HERS. **ROBERT CRANE** SERVES UP 20 QUESTIONS TO THE SWEET SOUL SISTER WHO DID THE *MAGNOLIA* SOUNDTRACK

DOROTHY STRATTEN—TWENTY YEARS AFTER HER DEATH, WE CELEBRATE THE *STAR 80* WHO IS STILL IN OUR HEARTS. A CLASSIC PICTORIAL

ROLLING IN IT—POP THE CRISTAL! FOUR OVER-THE-TOP ITEMS TO SPLURGE ON WHEN YOUR IPO COMES IN: A SPORTS CAR, A WRISTWATCH, A PERSONAL HELICOPTER AND A $13 MILLION YACHT

ART AND CRAFT—A PUBLICITY-HUNGRY EX-CON HATCHES A BURGLARY PLAN—AND ENLISTS AN OLD FRIEND FROM THE CLINK TO HELP HIM PULL IT OFF. FICTION BY **DONALD E. WESTLAKE**

LUXURY CAMPING—IN THE WOODS BUT DON'T FEEL LIKE ROUGHING IT? HOW ABOUT TENTS WITH LIGHT-SENSITIVE WINDOWS, A HANDHELD GLOBAL-POSITIONING SYSTEM AND (OF COURSE) GOURMET FOOD?

PLUS: THE **EMINEM** PHENOMENON, HOW TO TURN A FRIENDSHIP INTO A LOVE AFFAIR, CITY GIRLS: PART THREE, RUM THIRST-QUENCHERS, THE IMAC-IZATION OF AMERICA, AND A SPECIAL HOT-WEATHER PLAYMATE NAMED **SUMMER**

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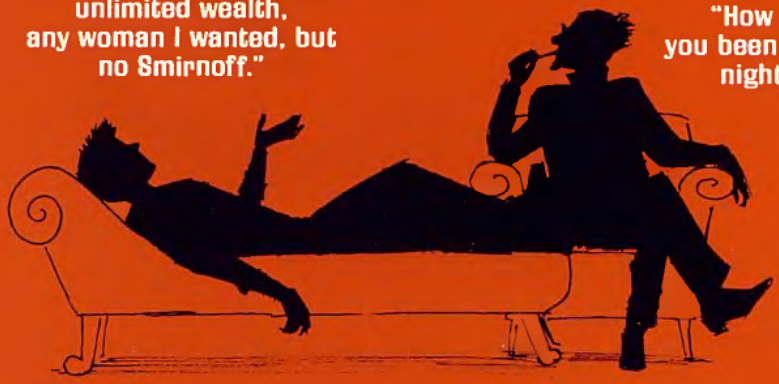
"How long have you been having these nightmares?"



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